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NEWS

- **Early Preservation Experience:**
In Pittsburgh and Nationwide
- **1991 Annual Report & Highlights of 1992**
- **What the Syria Mosque Site Needs**
- **Pittsburgh Architecture:**
Classicism

This (Strange) Year in Preservation

Attempting to overcome the factor of lead time — the time between having to stop writing and being able to publish — has put us through our paces this year, what with the dynamic, unstable situation in historic preservation, in Pittsburgh and in all of Pennsylvania. We will take the saga in sequence.

Latter-day Landmarks

In March, attention turned to two excellent preservation candidates, neither a City Landmark. On March 7, the South Side Planning Forum submitted a nomination form to the Historic Review Commission for 901-11 Bingham Street, the turn-of-the-century brick buildings on the Mackintosh-Hemphill site. The owner was notified of the nomination.

When the question of the sale and demolition of the Syria Mosque arose in mid-March, Landmarks' President Arthur Ziegler wrote to Jack L. Weaver, the Recorder of Syria Temple, to make the following points:

- Syria Temple should not demolish the Mosque as part of the sales agreement;
- the community deserves to know the developer's plans for demolition/construction before the building comes down;
- any replacement is almost certain to be inferior as a work of architecture;
- every possibility of continuing use should be explored.

On March 25, the Shriners did vote to sell the Mosque to National Development Company. On the 26th, two things happened: the paper *In Pittsburgh*, aware of the sale vote, nominated the Mosque to the HRC as a City Landmark, and National applied for a building permit. National won out, by two hours. Any hope that National might keep the Mosque voluntarily was formally dashed by a statement on the 28th. At this time the Mosque was still Shriner property, though a sales agreement of the Temple Holding Corporation with National was in effect and the demolition permit would be valid until September 26. National's client was seemingly to be Presbyterian University Health Systems, a subsidiary of the University of Pittsburgh, and the Mosque's replacement was to be used for offices.

And yet, the *In Pittsburgh* nomination continued to have a sort of phantom existence, with a hearing on its merit April 5. The legal position of demolition versus landmarking seemed to be open to

further examination, and thus to allow some hope. Musicians and rock concertgoers, as well as those who remember symphony and opera there, voiced their belief that the Mosque should be saved, given good air conditioning (which everyone agreed it lacked), and generally upgraded. Journalists admitted that the building was no architectural masterpiece — no one ever claimed that — but stressed that it was a picturesque and interesting building that fitted well into the ensemble around the Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial; that it was one of Pittsburgh's few concert halls of any great size; that it had long associations with the city's cultural life; that it was fundamental to the vitality of Oakland; and finally, that its demolition would be one large further step in the deterioration of Oakland through mindless corporate development. Editorials of the *Press* and *Post-Gazette* disagreed; they pointed out that no one had conferred any formal distinction on the building thus far, that the Shriners had a sales agreement with National, and that the building was worn out.

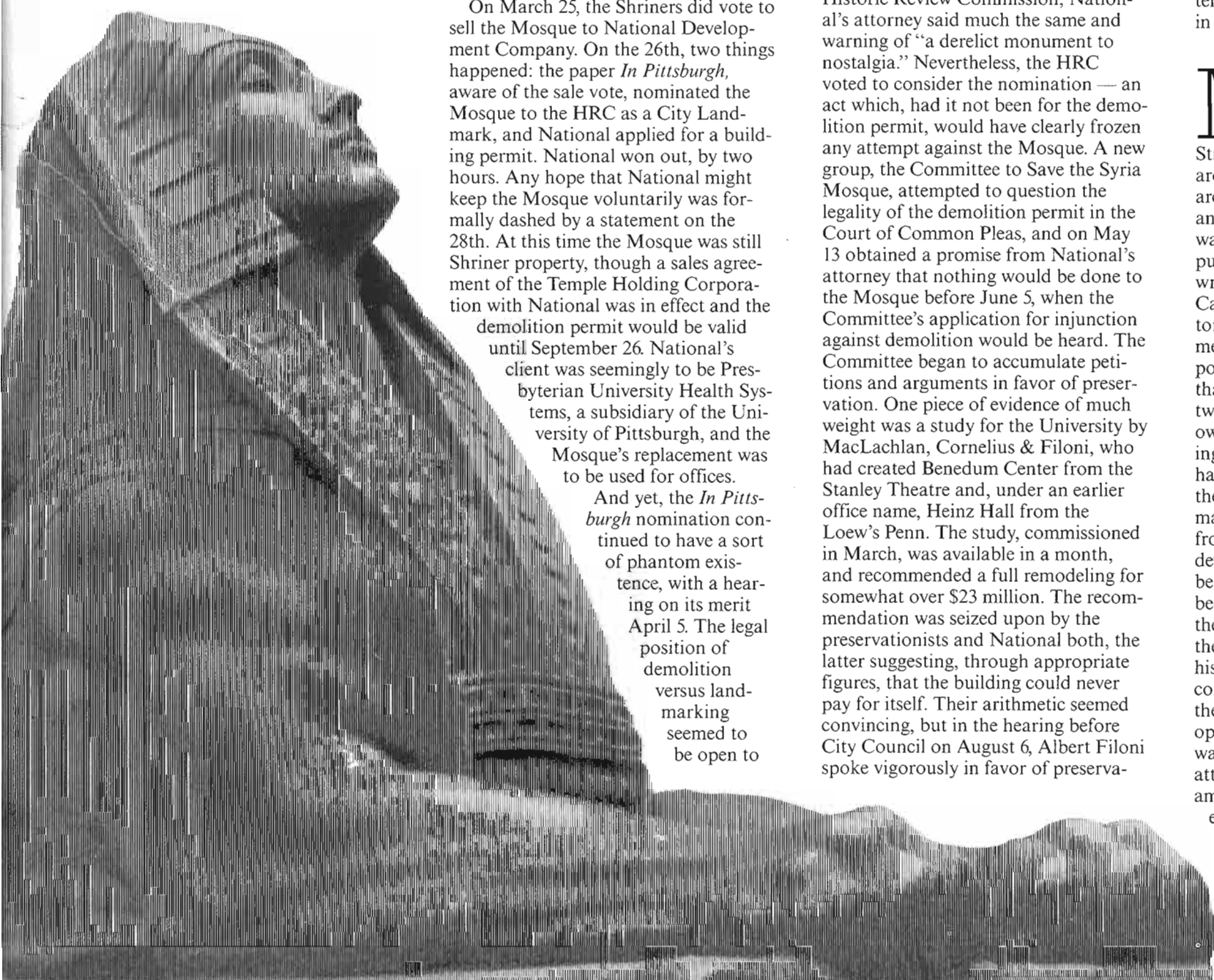
At the April 5 hearing before the Historic Review Commission, National's attorney said much the same and warning of "a derelict monument to nostalgia." Nevertheless, the HRC voted to consider the nomination — an act which, had it not been for the demolition permit, would have clearly frozen any attempt against the Mosque. A new group, the Committee to Save the Syria Mosque, attempted to question the legality of the demolition permit in the Court of Common Pleas, and on May 13 obtained a promise from National's attorney that nothing would be done to the Mosque before June 5, when the Committee's application for injunction against demolition would be heard. The Committee began to accumulate petitions and arguments in favor of preservation. One piece of evidence of much weight was a study for the University by MacLachlan, Cornelius & Filoni, who had created Benedum Center from the Stanley Theatre and, under an earlier office name, Heinz Hall from the Loew's Penn. The study, commissioned in March, was available in a month, and recommended a full remodeling for somewhat over \$23 million. The recommendation was seized upon by the preservationists and National both, the latter suggesting, through appropriate figures, that the building could never pay for itself. Their arithmetic seemed convincing, but in the hearing before City Council on August 6, Albert Filoni spoke vigorously in favor of preserva-

tion and protested the "unfair" use of his figures, calculated with specific University purposes in mind.

On June 5 came the interesting revelation that the University's general administration and Presbyterian University Health Systems, an element of the University's medical system, had been bidding against each other for the land. National, whose winning bid was \$10 million, was in fact acting for Presbyterian University. (Landmarks, at this time, was in contact with University officials about development of the site, urging a building of limited height for the northern lot, with the Mosque itself preserved and somewhat improved as an auditorium for the University, the health center, and the public.) The University Chancellor and faculty were rather peeved, and arguments over who had done or failed to do what, and who had authority over whom, enjoyed brisk activity for a while. (The Shriners' internal politics produced even more retrospective arguments, over things such as whether the sale vote meeting was properly advertised, and the competence of the building management in 1973.)

Meanwhile, 901-911 Bingham Street had its supporters rallying around. Franklin Toker, a Pittsburgh architectural historian, and the Bostonian Margaret Henderson Floyd, who was doing a study of the buildings' putative architects Alden & Harlow, wrote most favorably to the HRC. Caroline Boyce, former executive director of the South Side Local Development Company, wrote not only to support landmarking but to make clear that it had been understood for some two years by SSLDC, and the present owner and his architect, that the buildings were valuable and would be rehabilitated. This contradicted claims by the purchaser that the move to landmark was unforeseen. It appeared too, from the proposal of a South Side developer, Thomas Tripoli, that it might be possible to develop 901-11 as a bed-and-breakfast inn and to develop the much larger cleared area of land on the site as the Texan William Grant and his Lazar Properties wished, with no constriction of their development. From the preservationists' viewpoint, Grant's opposition to the buildings' survival was thus not rational. Lazar's own attorneys accumulated their own ammunition nevertheless, concentrating exclusively on money spent, money to be gained, and the need to clear away

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PHLF NEWS

New Members in 1991

Many new members joined the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation this year. We are very pleased to have their support and welcome their participation in our special events, education programs, and historic preservation programs.

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Generous Bequest Received

We were gratified this summer to learn of receiving a generous bequest from Miss Patricia A. Thauer, living near Philadelphia at the time of her death. She had been a Landmarks member for 18 years, and until a dozen years ago had lived in Pittsburgh. Despite her move, she had retained fond recollections of Pittsburgh; and had continued her membership with Landmarks until her death. The funds will be placed in our Endowment Fund in the name of Miss Patricia A. Thauer.

Interns at Landmarks

For the past several months, Landmarks has been fortunate to have two interns assisting our staff: Nanci Meyer and Dan Holland.

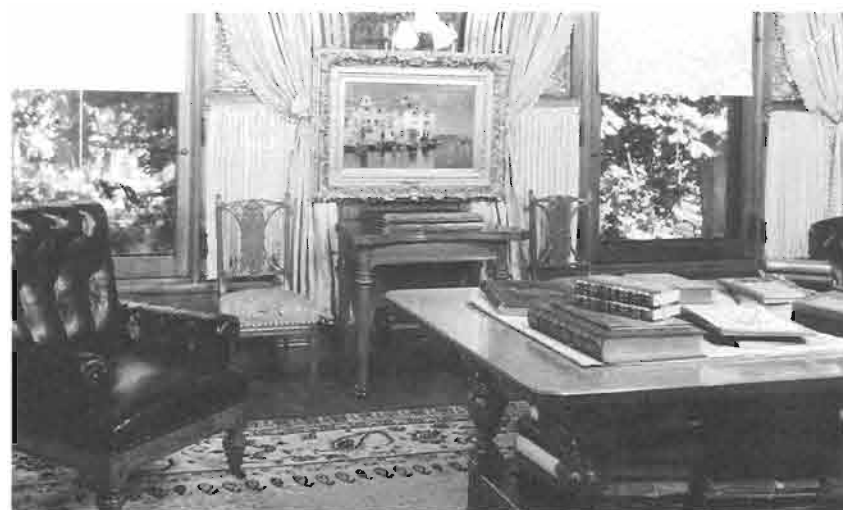


Nanci Meyer, from Faribault, Minnesota, heard of Landmarks from a professor in urban studies who uses Landmarks' work in his teaching. She has a M.A. in urban studies and in planning and regional/urban design from Mankato State University, and also has experience in site analysis and a large variety of descriptive and prescriptive work needed for development of open areas. Most recently she has been an interior design consultant.

Historic preservation has thus far been tangential to her education, and it was to gain more depth in this subject, which greatly interests her, that brought her to Pittsburgh late this summer.



Daniel Holland has a 1991 B.A. in applied history from Carnegie-Mellon University, and has had a varied work experience, including documentation of closed Monongahela Valley steel plants for the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. Research and documentation are his specialties, and he hopes to apply his skills to a mixture of historic-preservation and economic-development projects such as that at Station Square. While at Landmarks, he has been working mainly on the Afro-American Historic Sites Survey, coordinated by Landmarks Design Associates with assistance from the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation.



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PHLF News is published six times each year for the members of the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation. This year, the newsletter has expanded, both in the number of pages and in the number of issues. It is supported through membership dollars, proceeds from Station Square, and advertising revenue.

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Early Preservation Experience: In Pittsburgh and Nationwide

On October 16, 1991, Landmarks' president Arthur P. Ziegler, Jr. delivered the following address to the Plenary Session of the convention of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in San Francisco. He was asked to look back over the preservation movement since the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and to make recommendations for the future.



A familiar sight 30 years ago.

Threats in the '60s

I entered the preservation movement in September, 1964. I had not heard of the term "historic preservation," did not yet realize that there was a National Trust, and had no conception that I was joining a national cause.

A friend and I inadvertently came across a block of marvelous Victorian buildings only to learn that all the buildings on the block and another 1500 Victorian buildings in the Manchester neighborhood in Pittsburgh were being studied for demolition by the Urban Redevelopment Authority. We went on to discover that URA planned the demolition of six additional large neighborhoods in our City's North Side and planned to run an elevated highway through the park in the area. As we got deeper into the work to save these magnificent neighborhoods, we learned quickly about the pressures on our individual buildings and our historic districts in urban areas. Essentially they were these:

1. There was general neglect of individual landmark buildings and monuments. Our famous Richardson Court House, our great conservatory, the Fourth Avenue Post Office, the Allegheny Post Office, and Union Station all were in sad condition along with many others.
2. The city suffered from the combined pressure of high-rise development in the downtown coupled with flight to the suburbs. Old commercial buildings were being squeezed out of our Golden Triangle while the surrounding neighborhoods were being abandoned by those who could not afford to maintain them.

The 1300 block of Liverpool Street: this scene inspired James Van Trump and Arthur Ziegler to establish the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation.



3. This led to the general deterioration of inner-city housing stock. Its condition was best summed up by Ogden Nash who wrote:

*A primal termite knocked on wood;
And tasted it and found it good.
And that is why your cousin May
Fell through the parlour floor today!*

4. We faced a nightmare solution to all of these problems that was promulgated and vigorously implemented by government agencies, and often supported by the civic and commercial sectors: that of building more highways and undertaking urban renewal.

The latter was described by Edmund Bacon, a former urban renewal man who later became a preservationist, as solving the problem of garlic growing in a cow pasture by bulldozing the land down to bedrock. It got rid of the garlic all right, but there wasn't much left for the cows to eat.

Everyone agreed that the problems were monumental but the solution was worse than the cure. As we saw one unique area after another being bulldozed in our city, we agreed with Ada Louise Huxtable, who defined what she called the "New York solution": "Anything worth doing, is worth doing wrong." In the *New York Times* she said:

The appalling price paid to the Urban Expert Carpetbaggers delivering patent-medicine renewal in the 1960s can never be calculated in terms of the loss of unique and irreplaceable assets. It took acres of bulldozer desolation to teach us that a living organism was being destroyed.

Even the leaders of urban renewal were daunted by the task. I recall sitting next to our Director of City Planning, at a banquet in the mid-1960s, who said to me that "Pittsburgh in 20 years has redeveloped 2,000 acres. At that pace we will need another 60 more years to redevelop the remaining 12,000 acres that need redeveloping today." That allowed for nothing further to deteriorate! I might add that what he called redeveloping was simply leveling and putting up some generally unattractive and often hideous modern buildings that fared about as well economically as they did architecturally. (Gateway Center was the only exception economically.)

We quickly learned that the condition of Pittsburgh was the state of the nation.

Preservation at the Time

However, at that time preservation was a movement that was picking up steam. There were not many legally-protected historic districts, designated by local governments. Charleston and New Orleans had led the way. Some individual landmark buildings had been saved around the country, and the idea of the historic district was growing. Preservation was largely an effort carried out by individual leaders native to their city, and we think immediately of St. Clair Wright in Annapolis, Frances Edmunds in Charleston, Lee Adler in Savannah, Antoinette Downing in Providence, and the work underway in New Orleans, Boston, New York, and a few other cities.

As preservationists tried to tackle neighborhoods, they found themselves at a loss for financing tools. The only way to really restore a neighborhood at that time was to try to replace the poor with a more well-to-do population; no government subsidies for housing renewal were available.

The movement was growing rapidly, driven, really, by the horrors of urban renewal. The more urban renewal was adopted by cities, the more preservationists grew in numbers and opposed it. Because urban renewal targeted 50 to several hundred acres at a time, preservationists were compelled to think big.



Restoration in Annapolis.



In 1966 the Report of the Special Committee on Historic Preservation of the United States Conference of Mayors was published as a marvelous book in which the important words were written:

If the preservation movement is to be successful, it must go beyond saving bricks and mortar. It must go beyond saving an occasional historic house and opening museums. It must be more than a cult of antiquarians. It must do more than revere a few precious national shrines. It must attempt to give a sense of orientation to our society, using structures and objects of the past to establish values of time and place.

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Early Preservation Experience: In Pittsburgh and Nationwide *(Continued from page 3)*



Above: Making a start on the Langenheim house in Manchester. Right: Citizens of Manchester.

Preservationists took those words to heart, together with J. Paul Getty's reminder that "the meek shall inherit the earth, but **not** its mineral rights." In other words, we American preservationists should become leaders in giving direction to our society and we should fight hard.

And fight we did, and although we often were standing among the rubble, we began to chalk up notable victories. The Penn Central case and the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 were signal triumphs.

In Pittsburgh we experimented with the preservation of neighborhoods as well as of individual monuments, and in the neighborhoods we tried to preserve them with, by, and for the people who lived in them. As *Preservation News* said in 1972:

The real objectives of historic preservation — a decent living environment, equal access and mobility for housing without regard to skin color and architectural preservation when appropriate. This is the essence of the Pittsburgh approach.

Federal housing programs were beginning to develop, and we seized on them and used them in new ways, not to subsidize new construction but to subsidize restoration.



Signs of Success

A strange thing happened. Because we preservationists around the country had inspiration rather than money, we were forced to be practical. The architectural profession, the planning profession, the public service professions all exhibited little interest in preservation. Preservationists were pariahs. Because we were fighting against the major powers of the federal government and the powers in each city, with few resources other than their belief in the buildings themselves and what those buildings could do for our society, we were forced to be practical. We had to design programs that could operate with little money and great success. We could not waste a penny as the urban renewal experts could. That, coupled with the fact that what we said and what we believed in touched many people, our constituency in this country grew. We began to save single buildings, and then blocks of buildings, and then neighborhoods of buildings. Our results were looking good and people in the areas were feeling good, while at the same time many of the leading exponents of renewal

through clearance began to illustrate Chicago Mayor Daley's wonderful remark about his own administration, "We shall reach greater and greater platitudes of achievement."

Even in 1950 and 1960 dollars we could point out that in Washington, D.C. an acre of land generally was valued at \$547,000 but an acre of land in the historic area called Georgetown was valued at \$1,600,000. In Richmond from 1955 to 1963, general land values rose 30% but in the historic district 163%. We could point out that in Savannah tourism way back then was generating \$60,000,000 of income to the city, all based on historic preservation and that in Pioneer Square in Seattle, tax values went up 800% and crime dropped from 15% of city total to one-half a percent.

We were racking up incredible results on a shoestring investment. I remember learning from Peter Brink that in The Strand in Galveston property values went up 208% in three years as compared with 85% for the city as a whole, and in the same three years crime decreased 73% in the historic Strand while city-wide it increased 17%. I did a study for Charleston, South Carolina and found that Frances Edmunds' seed fund of \$100,000 had generated \$12,000,000 worth of restoration, and while the City tax base declined in ten years by 22%, in the historic district it went up 100%.

And a shoestring it was. The government had no grants for preservation at that time. What seemed to us like generous gifts of \$10,000 or \$50,000 or even \$100,000 were all the preservationists had. In Pittsburgh our first Revolving Fund was \$100,000, and with it we were battling the deterioration of a great many inner-city neighborhoods, together with what I would estimate to be about \$300,000,000 worth of urban renewal and highway effort.

In spite of American preservationists' weak finances, our good ideas and growing movement broadened and increased in strength rapidly. Through Nellie Longworth and Preservation Action, we learned how to lobby at every governmental level, and preservation laws of various kinds proliferated, including those allowing the tax credits that fostered nationwide restoration projects supported by real-estate developers. Never before and never since have we seen preservation activities carried out so diligently by so many with such excellent results.

Bob McNulty, as the director of design arts at the National Endowment for the Arts, got all of us thinking about preservation and urban planning in broader and more interrelated ways.

Through NEA we were enabled to deal with issues like city edges, waterfronts, parks and sculpture, and street furnishings, as well as our buildings.

The National Trust reached out with its Main Street program and its regional offices. Universities launched graduate schools of preservation, and in most recent times schools of architecture at the universities have begun once again to teach fledgling architects about historic styles.

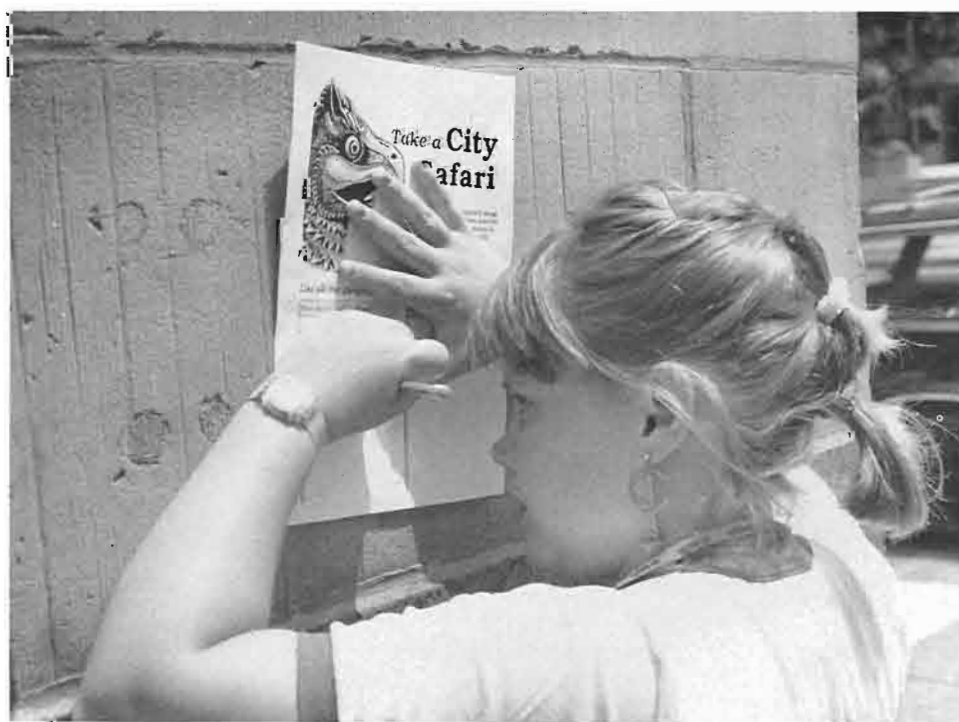


The Hands-On History Summer Institute for teachers.

Landmarks' Launches Education Programs

In Pittsburgh we recognized the truth of Sir Shane Leslie's observation that "the American sign of civic progress is to tear down the familiar and erect the monstrous." To that end we decided to try to get ahead of the crises by launching a department of education within our organization, which has invaded the public and private schools and also teaches teachers how to teach our local history, architecture, landscape architecture, and urban planning. We issue a stream of publications and books, and work with our public television station in the production of half-hour long broadcasts dealing with local architecture, and follow them with tours and publications.

We took a leaf from our own book: we had been telling the business community that it was possible to generate profits without demolishing and con-





The Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation is the prime developer of Station Square, a 52-acre riverfront site opposite downtown Pittsburgh.

structing anew. We began Station Square on the site of the old Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad Station as a demonstration project of that principle, so organized that if we were right, we ourselves would enjoy profits and develop a steady, reliable stream of income to support our activities in addition to our fund-raising. We would, in fact, create a living endowment by putting our own principles to work in the marketplace.

Some Cautions

Have we American preservationists had difficulties as a movement? Yes, one created by the fact that we are often opposing the official plans of our cities. That means that we cannot expect to be supported by these powers on a steady and reliable basis. We all depend upon angels, fund-raising events, and special projects. Also, we have never fully successfully allied ourselves with the conservation movement, although our own movement is more unified than that one is. In Pittsburgh both movements are now coming together to promote the development of a Heritage Walking and Bicycling Trail along our three rivers that will have historic marker information along the way. Another failure has been our inability to be really effective at communicating the astonishing economic results of preservation.

Have we preservationists made mistakes? Surely, we have. I would just cite two. The first is that, through the Historic Preservation Act, and the Tax Act we created a federal and State bureaucracy that became too literal in its interpretation of historic preservation. At times astonished preservation-minded owners have wanted to adaptively restore buildings that could not be rendered workable without interior modifications that were disallowed because our bureaucracy demanded the impossible. Even though we are preservationists we must always realize that buildings can be improved upon through the years, that the first designers are not always perfect, and that adaptations are necessary for our times. I was non-plussed and amused recently when we were advocating the continuation of ornamental lighting we had placed on the historic Smithfield Street Bridge in Pittsburgh, lighting that has been universally loved by residents and visitors. Someone in the review process said that the lighting was not there when the bridge was built in the 1880s and therefore it should not be there today. If we were to follow that principle, we should also remove all of the automotive traffic from the bridge and make everyone leave their cars at either

end and go across on foot or horse and wagon.

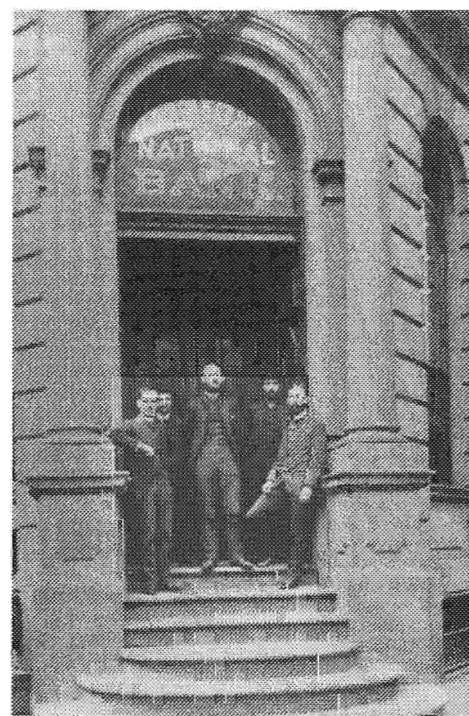
The second mistake, if that is the right word, is really one that I would call "slow learning." I think we have often blamed developers or government leaders for specific problems that create preservation challenges. But the truth is that we have not realized that what we the people of the United States have done to our cities has been deliberate and well thought-out by our planning establishment and passed by our elected officials.

If I may quote the book *New Classicism*:

The congested, fragmented, unsatisfying suburbs and the disintegrating urban centers of today are not the products of laissez-faire, nor the results of mindless greed. They are thoroughly planned to be as they are: The direct result of zoning and subdivision ordinances zealously administered by thousands of planning departments. America since the war is the result of these ordinances . . . If the results are dismaying, it is because the current model of the city being projected is dismal. Today's ordinances dictate only four criteria for urbanism: the free and rapid flow of traffic; parking in quantity; the vigorous separation of uses; and relatively low density of building. The latter two demand an amorphous waste of land, and car traffic has become the central, unavoidable experience of the public realm. The traditional pattern of walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods is not encouraged, and more often than not inadvertently proscribed by some of the provisions of these ordinances. Designers find themselves in the ironic situation of being forbidden from building in the manner of our most admired historic places. One cannot propose a new Charleston or New Orleans without seeking substantial variances from current codes.

And therefore I would propose that as we look toward the future role of historic preservation that we begin to address and influence the future as we do the preservation of the past. It is we who know the values of the Charlestons and the New Orleans and the San Franciscos; it is we who therefore shoulder the burden to deliver the message that will change the hearts and minds of the builders and governors of our country.

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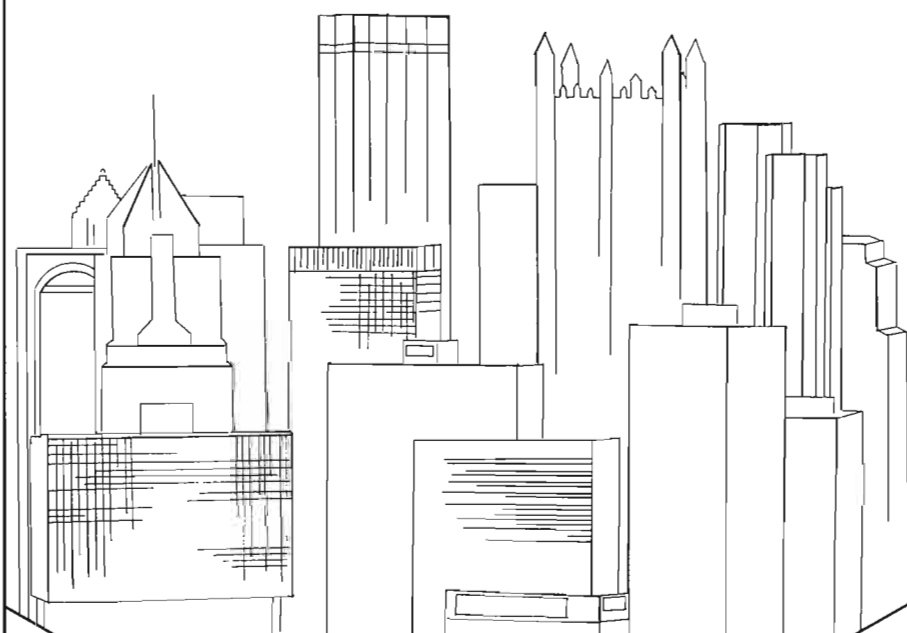
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Program Accomplishments in 1991

A STRESSFUL YEAR

This has been a stressful year in local historic preservation, partly because of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's decision of July 10, partly because of local preservation crises: Syria Mosque, the integrity of the Civic Center of Oakland, 901-11 Bingham Street in the South Side, "Sunnyledge," 311 Lowenhill Street, 118 Woodland Road, the Schoolhouse Arts Center in Bethel Park, and the Ben Avon Elementary School, most notably. We have joined national and local organizations in an amicus brief, hoping to reverse the Supreme Court decision, and as regards the local issues have testified before official commissions, offered private advice, and published our opinions in PHLF News.

We have also advised on the new Pittsburgh preservation ordinance, reviewed environmental impact statements, and performed a variety of more routine chores from assistance for scholars to answering casual telephone inquiries.

PHLF News

PHLF News has increased in frequency of publication, and is looking more critically at both historic-preservation matters and new development than heretofore. We intend that, since historic preservation is so much in the public consciousness, our organization will become a true influence in the ongoing shaping of this region.

Advocacy

We have recently joined Preservation Pittsburgh, a coalition that will address itself to preservation advocacy. We continue liaison with the Steel Industry Heritage Task Force and with numerous other preservation groups whose interest is limited to specific topics or places.

The Preservation Fund

- *Meeting with the President*

On May 3, Harriet Henson, executive director of the Northside Tenants Reorganization Cooperative Association, and Stanley Lowe, director of Landmarks' Preservation Fund, traveled to St. Louis to discuss urban housing needs and resident-management strategies with President George Bush; Jack Kemp, Secretary of Housing & Urban Development; Bertha Gilkey, President of Cochran Gardens in St. Louis; and neighborhood representatives from six other cities.

- *Pittsburgh Housing & Commercial Projects*

Landmarks' Preservation Fund extended loans to support housing/commercial projects in Manchester at 1251 Liverpool Street, 1403 Sheffield Street, and 1007-11 Manhattan Street; in Allegheny West at 901-05 Western Avenue, 940 Beech Avenue, and the Darlington house on Brighton Road and Lincoln Avenue; in the Mexican War Streets at 1225 Monterey Street; on the South Side at Edwards Court on S. Thirteenth Street; and in Homewood at 7212 Race Street, 1074 Wheeler Street, and 607 North Homewood Avenue. As a result, 16 historic properties will be restored, and 12 new buildings will be constructed according to historic preservation standards.

- *National Building Museum Award*

Each year this prestigious organization, chartered by Congress and headquartered in the great Pension Building in Washington, D.C., gives a single national award for service relating to the architecture, planning, and development fields. This year they have chosen Pittsburgh as a city to receive the award, an extraordinary change in their policy. To receive the award on behalf of the city, six organizations (or types of organizations) will be represented; all our neighborhood community-based development corporations will be represented by Stanley Lowe.

- *Landmarks/PCRG/Lending Institutions*

We continue to provide leadership and administrative and technical assistance to the Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group (PCRG) through Stanley Lowe. PCRG now includes 26 neighborhood-based organizations. During the course of this year they developed a new computerized loan evaluation program that will help enable our local lending institutions to track carefully the loans to various neighborhoods and to African-Americans and other low-to-moderate income groups. PCRG also continued to work intensively with the banks and enlisted the support of their staffs to provide volunteer services and participate in community service programs. Through the good work of PCRG and the cooperation of the lending institutions, over \$400,000,000 has now been committed to inner-city neighborhood lending. Utilizing a foundation grant and a half-million dollar loan from Integra Bank, Landmarks is continuing its special loan program in support of the inner-city lending effort.

PCRG gave Landmarks its Community Reinvestment Act Service award, Community Banking Award, and Public/Private Partnership Award this year.

At the annual Northside conference awards dinner, the Northside Tenants Reorganization Cooperative Association, led by Harriet Henson, named our president Arthur Ziegler as their "person of the year," due to his efforts to support and help obtain financing for this innovative co-op owned by low-to-moderate-income, single-family black women.

Highlights of 1992

On October 29, 1991, the Board of Trustees approved the 1992 Work Plan for the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation staff. Program efforts continue to concentrate on historic property restoration and neighborhood assistance through Landmarks' Preservation Fund, public advocacy, historic preservation education, and the development of the Riverwalk of Industrial Artifacts at Station Square.

We look forward to featuring several new initiatives in 1992 in *PHLF News*. They are:

Preservation Fund

Stanley Lowe will continue to administer Landmarks' Preservation Fund, and to work with the Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group, lending institutions, and neighborhood organizations. He and Landmarks will work with the Community Design Center and various public bodies to "foster more and better historic-preservation and inner-city restoration programs." Specific projects for the year center on the renewal of Federal Street and Brighton Place low-income housing on the North Side, and moderate-income housing on the South Side.

Education & Events

Our education department plans to create and offer an "Architectural Apprentice Program" in the summer for high school students; a "Pittsburgh Heritage II" course for teachers (building on the popular "Pittsburgh Heritage I" course); and a photographic *Architectural Treasure Hunt of Downtown Pittsburgh* for school tours.

We plan to host the following membership lectures, tours, and conferences (the dates are tentative):

- James van Sweden of Oehme, van Sweden & Associates of Washington, D.C. (landscape architects) will present Landmarks' 1992 Distinguished Lecture on Historic Preservation (April).
- Our walking tours will feature Mission Hills in Mt. Lebanon (April 29), Lawrenceville (June 3), Allegheny Cemetery (June 7), Troy Hill (July 15), Dormont (September 30), and Thornburg (October 19). We will lead a bus tour to Albert Gallatin's house "Friendship Hill" in Fayette County on October 18. and a holiday tour in December to Brookville, Pennsylvania.
- On May 16, Landmarks, the Historic Review Commission, and the Allegheny Historic Preservation Society will sponsor a conference on Religious Properties, to be held at Calvary United Methodist Church.
- The Neville House Antiques Show will be on May 31, and Landmarks' Antiques Show will be on November 13, 14, and 15.

Surveys

Our staff will complete two surveys in the spring of 1992: a thematic survey of Afro-American Historic Sites in Allegheny County; and a survey of Sewickley Heights.

Publications

And, the fall of 1992 may bring the release of *Clyde Hare's Pittsburgh*, a collection of photographs by Clyde Hare documenting Pittsburgh from the 1950s to the present. Margaret Henderson Floyd's book on the architectural legacy of Longfellow, Alden & Harlow in Boston and Pittsburgh will most probably be released in 1993 by MIT Press and Landmarks.

1992 promises to be an exciting, active year. We look forward to the participation of our trustees, members, and friends. Please call us (412/471-5808) with your program suggestions or questions; or, stop by our offices on the fourth floor of the Landmarks Building at Station Square.

Education

We served over 12,000 people this year through our tours, lectures, teacher in-services, exhibits, "Architects-in-the-Schools" program, family workshops, adult education classes, conferences, "Portable Pittsburgh" program, and "Hands-On History Festival."

Two new educational resources were created: the *Landmark Survivors* video tape featuring the life stories of seven Pittsburgh landmarks, and a slide show on the Allegheny County Court House and Jail.

In January, *Allegheny Cemetery: A Romantic Landscape in Pittsburgh* was released. We learned in November that the Western Pennsylvania Printing Industry Association is giving the book an Honorable Mention. Throughout the year, work continued on the Longfellow, Alden & Harlow book by Margaret Henderson Floyd and on *Clyde Hare's Pittsburgh*.

Diane DeNardo, Landmarks' education director, was invited to speak at four major conferences: Working Together: Museum/School Partnerships, sponsored by the Pennsylvania Federation of Museums & Historical Organizations; the Nineteenth Annual Early Childhood Education Conference, sponsored by the Beaver Valley Intermediate Unit; the Thirty-eighth Annual Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies Conference; and the Pennsylvania Regional Arts-in-Education Conference, sponsored by the Pittsburgh Fund for Arts Education. Through these conferences, Landmarks is gaining local, state, and national recognition for its education programs.

All of our educational resources highlight the history and architecture of the Pittsburgh region and foster an appreciation for historic preservation.

Historic Properties

• *Neville House, Collier Township*

Through the efforts of the Neville House Auxiliary and Colonial Dames, the two bedrooms adjoining the living room were restored and furnished. The historic house dating from 1785 was open for public tours on June 7, the day of the annual antiques show, and on November 22 and 23, and December 7 and 8 to celebrate the holiday season.

• *The Old Post Office, Central North Side*

On the eighth birthday of the Pittsburgh Children's Museum, the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation gave the Old Allegheny Post Office building to the Children's Museum. Since the Museum's founding in 1983, it has been located in the Old Allegheny Post Office. Under the terms of Landmarks' donation, the building must be maintained as the Children's Museum and the architecture cannot be changed.

• *Old St. Luke's, Scott Township*

1991 has been a year of orderly progress for this 1852 Gothic country church. The churchyard underwent archaeological investigation, and a video on it was begun. The church also figured in a video, "Our Lasting Inheritance." The archives were updated and put in order. Among public events was the "Whiskey Rebellion Sunday," with St. Luke's, the Neville House in Collier Township, and the Miller Homestead in South Park Township centers of activity.

• *The Burtner House, Harrison Township*

Restoration of this 1820-period farmhouse went on in 1991, with a new summer kitchen built, mantels installed in the living room and house kitchen, and large plexiglass panes in 14 windows replaced by smaller panes of glass. Exterior woodwork was painted, and stonework was pointed.

Memberships

One hundred and fifty new members joined Landmarks this year, including 28 corporate members. Our corporate membership program was initiated in July by staff member Eric Dickerson, and we have had a 15% success rate.

About 185 members volunteered at Landmarks throughout the year, helping with our special events, education programs, and office work. We greatly appreciate the efforts of the volunteers who make many of our programs a success.

Artifacts

Four major artifacts were secured for display along Landmarks' Riverwalk of Industrial Artifacts at Station Square. Alcoa donated an aluminum smelting pot that was installed near the Gateway Clipper ramp. A mockup of a section of the arch of the Hell Gate Bridge, made around 1915 by the American Bridge Company, was installed near the central parking lot. Shenango Furnace Company donated a Mesta vertical blast-furnace blowing engine, c. 1900, that is in place in the east lot, near the Smithfield Street Bridge. And the Allegheny County Commissioners donated a rotating beacon light from the County Airport. In addition, two other artifacts, our 1905 electric steel furnace and our refractory brick press, were permanently located.

Station Square

Our staff worked with landscape architects Oehme, van Sweden and Associates of Washington, D.C. and urban planners Ehrenkrantz, Eckstut & Whitelaw of New York to establish design guidelines for future development at Station Square. The 52-acre riverfront site opposite the Golden Triangle is owned by the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation. The concept for the Riverwalk of Industrial Artifacts, River Park, and an expanded Transportation Museum was refined. When funding is secured, these three elements will create a major public attraction for Pittsburgh and initiate a new phase of commercial, housing, and cultural development at Station Square.

Landmarks' work at Station Square continues to attract architects and planners, who visited Station Square from at least eight foreign countries this year.

Station Square Transportation Museum

The Sixth Annual Auto Festival of June 29 had 132 exhibits and attracted over 750 visitors. Five parades included antique cars from the Museum, one of them the June 15 Desert Storm Parade. The October 5 opening of the Carnegie Science Center saw 14 Museum cars on hand, and seven took part in the Halloween Parade. Ritter's Diner has been converted into a street entrance, museum shop, and display space for small objects, and a Westinghouse Skybus vehicle is to be added to the rear as an audio-visual theater.

Conclusion

Landmarks continues vigorously into a new year, which it awaits with anticipation albeit in some suspense. The eventual Supreme Court decision will tend to affirm the validity of our revised preservation ordinance, let us hope; and there will be the content of the ordinance to consider. New publication ideas are being added to projects now under way, and the *PHLF News* will continue to seek ways of developing its scope and influence. Station Square, Phase II, will be more fully detailed in plan. The year has challenge, and good prospects.

The Pittsburgh region is our home, a familiar place we do not want to leave. But without historic preservation, it could leave us.

A Year-End Gift

Since its founding in 1964 as a non-profit membership organization, Landmarks has made a difference in the life of Pittsburgh. Our great accomplishments have been to identify and save architectural and industrial landmarks, preserve historic neighborhoods, educate the public regarding our history, and create Station Square.

Our work continues as vigorously as ever, with the help of members' contributions. We have no governmental support, and depend on individual donations to maintain our General Fund and our individual projects.

Our program goals for 1992 are ambitious, and your contribution to the Landmarks General Fund is the means by which we can attain them. Please contribute now, and help us keep working for the future of Pittsburgh's past.

CONTRIBUTIONS

to Landmarks' General Fund in 1992 will help us:

- ◆ advocate the preservation of endangered landmarks.
- ◆ retrieve endangered artifacts that will later be displayed in a riverfront walk at Station Square.
- ◆ provide technical assistance and funding support through our Preservation Fund to more than 20 neighborhood/community groups that are restoring historic properties.
- ◆ complete a survey of historical sites in Allegheny County relating to Black history.
- ◆ organize the Landmarks library and describe our historical collections so they can be available for research purposes.
- ◆ offer educational programs such as *Portable Pittsburgh*, *Pittsburgh Heritage*, the *Hands-On History* summer institute, teacher inservices, and family workshops.
- ◆ publish major books, brochures, and *PHLF News*.
- ◆ host tours and special events for the benefit of our members and the public.

Enclosed is my year-end contribution of \$ _____ to Landmarks' General Fund.

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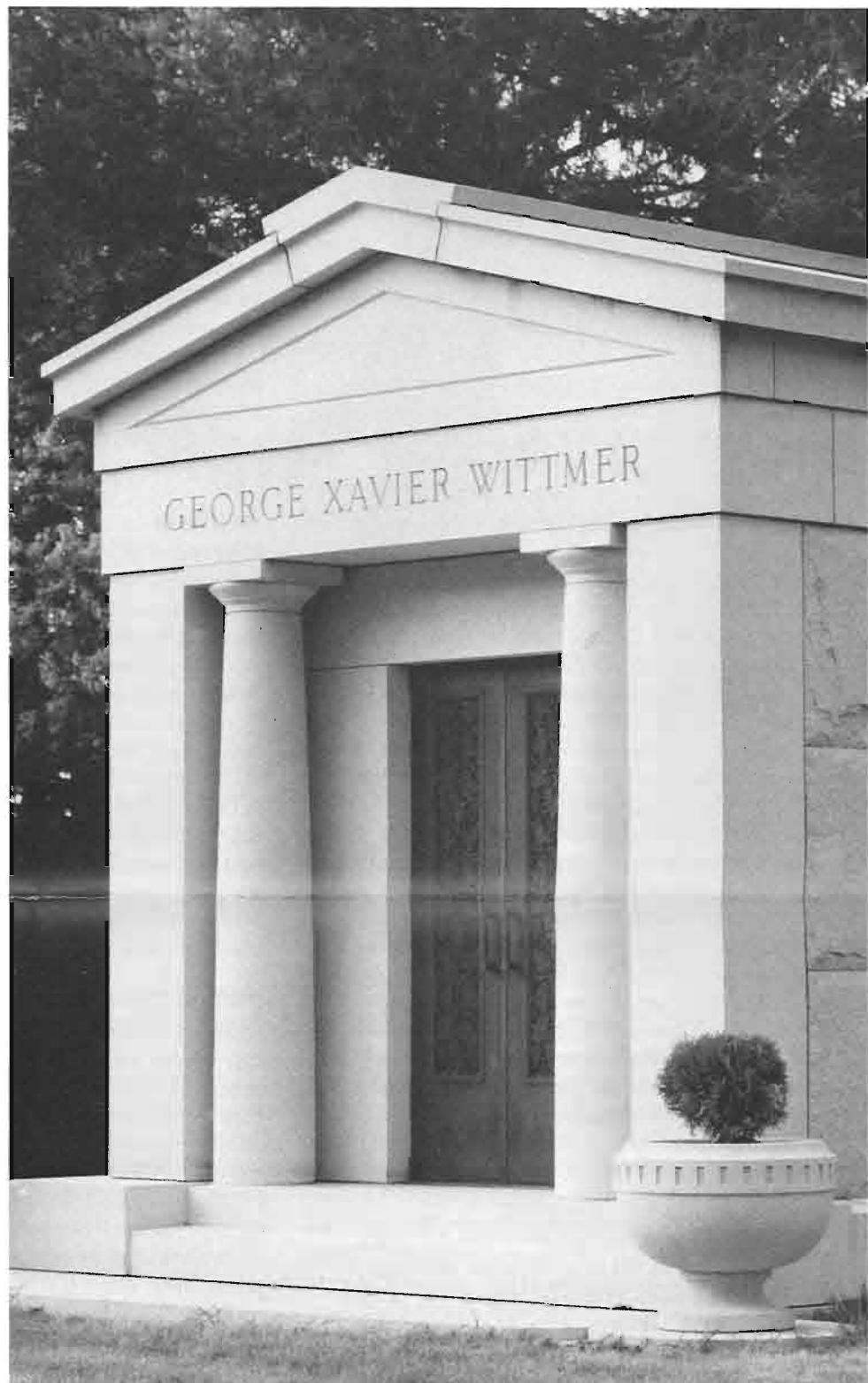
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PITTSBURGH ARCHITECTURE

Walter C. Kidney

This mausoleum, built like a small Classical temple, truly expresses its construction. Solid granite columns, antae, and jamb-stones carry solid granite lintels, separate stones that rest upon them. The whole structure is held together by its weight.



I have been saying that a Classical design will probably be needed for the building on the Syria Mosque site if it is to fit decently into that part of the Civic Center. Such a remark, from one of my generation, brings with it the risk of a bad conscience. Modernism, militant then complacent, gave me an architectural ideology of a puritanical kind hard to shake. In theory, indeed, it remains fundamentally sound (though the executed results, the actual building one sees, amount in my eyes to a Barmecide feast).

The idea of a Classical office building in modern America is admittedly a little hard to take, on the other hand, for at least two reasons. First, it almost always expresses a fictitious rather than a real structure.

Accepting Classicism, then, means almost invariably a departure from absolute constructional truth. What it offers is a familiar but highly versatile means of visually comprehending buildings, a system of composition refined and added to over thousands of years. It has an eternal quality through having

been so long familiar to so many peoples; this may at times override its ignoring or even contradiction of actual structure, and even that perpetual nagging urge to design in a way expressive of one's own culture. Not that we seem successful in doing this.

Even if we abstain from the Classical temple order, Classicism has lessons in massing, scale, proportions, the relief and recession of details, the ways moldings and sculpture can catch the light. Even rather simple buildings, when their few elements are well conceived, can do this.

For the new building on the Syria Mosque site, it may be that a fancy quasi-architecture of pilasters, entablatures, and non-structural arches will be needed — an exterior as much sculpture as architecture in its editing of structural fact and meticulous handling of surface. But in most cases the sturdy and simple geometry of "Mount Braddock," its edges softened here and there by ornamentation, will give us a better example. Most so-called traditional design of today is an unorganized, proportion-

less jumble of arches and decorative motifs, illiterate, vulgar-genteel. A local magazine, *Builder/Architect*, shows just how prevalent this pretentious, rootless type of design is around here.

Real Classical architecture, fancy or plain, organizes everything, gets the proportions just right, puts a touch of ornament where it will enliven the whole composition, comes up with a lucid and self-respecting piece of construction of whatever size. It has lessons for the suburbs as well as the Civic Center.

TURE: *Classicism*



In the walls of this bank, the main structural system is one of arches, stones braced against one another and held in shape by the weight of the surrounding masonry. But a system of columns — here imitated as pilasters — and lintels — here the architraves of a full entablature — present a fictitious temple construction.



Both of the above buildings are held together by weight. A framed structure has to be held in shape by joints, brackets, struts, something of the sort, to maintain rigidity . . .



. . . but this jointing and bracing has never found significant architectural expression. Steel-framed buildings of early in this century retained a Classical treatment.

As did wooden porches, where the rough carpentry was cased in.



"Mount Braddock" in Fayette County was built in 1803. Its environment has been beset in many ways: a shopping center, an automobile graveyard, new and colorless houses, strip mines. But it remains a Great House, a big, solid, symmetrical, foursquare place with a little delicate Classical ornament to trim its stonework. To destroy its dignity, whatever the surroundings, you would have to destroy the house itself.

NEW AT THE CORNERSTONE

Pittsburgh History & Landmarks
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& Gift Shop

Architectural Monographs

The Outlet book company has initiated an inexpensive series of architectural monographs. Each over-sized, all-color edition features the work of an internationally renowned architect. The first two books in the series cover the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan, respectively. Each volume in the series sells for \$14.99. These Outlet titles make a handsome introduction to the work of these architects.

Preservation Press

The Preservation Press has added a new title to their series on house and building renovation. This one is entitled **Repairing Old and Historic Windows, A Manual for Architects and Homeowners** (\$24.95, paperback). Related Preservation Press titles carried by the Cornerstone include **Walls and Molding**, **Masonry**, and **Respectful Rehabilitation**.

Artifacts & Antiques

We also have for sale quite a few artifacts, antiques, and collectibles. They include a theater chair from the old Liberty Theater; a mammoth cast-iron weight scale from the Pittsburgh Public Schools; a beautiful hand-carved wooden newel post; and an assortment of pedestals and pillars made of such materials as oak, marble, onyx, and ceramic tile. New items are added weekly.

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Preservation Scene



311 Lowenhill Street.

311 Lowenhill Street

In mid-October, this property and its board-and-batten farmhouse of c. 1864 were in the news as a center of controversy. Participants were a Maronite parish, owners; a Jehovah's Witnesses congregation, prospective buyers; Regional Resources, Inc., which has nominated the property as a City Historic Landmark and would like to buy it for a tree farm; the Beechview neighbors, who deplore the sagging condition of the deserted house but want it restored rather than destroyed; and the Historic Review and City Planning Commissions, respectively for and against recommending designation to City Council. The house is not only a rare Victorian Gothic and board-and-batten house for Pittsburgh, but its wild, tree-grown yard is a large open area with a spectacular view toward the Triangle. This could be a remarkably beautiful place if the house were put in repair and the grounds put in some, not excessive, state of order.

"Willow Cottage"

The owners of the Howe-Childs gatehouse at Fifth Avenue and Woodland Road were suing the City of Pittsburgh this fall, appealing the denial by the Historic Review Commission of a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition. The owners have been seeking a demolition permit for the City Historic Landmark for the last two years, claiming that rehabilitating the house is very uneconomical and maintaining it a hardship. They went to the Common Pleas Court about a year-and-a-half ago, but the case was remanded to the HRC for a further hearing.

The Certificate was denied once more this August and the owners resumed their suit, claiming that being forced to retain "Willow Cottage" is an unconstitutional taking. The Landmark status was in being when the present owners purchased the cottage, and they had no reason not to seek competent professional help before buying it as far as we can see, and we ourselves feel that in buying the house they undertook a definite obligation.

"Sunnyledge"

We learned at the end of October that the present owners of the McClelland house could no longer afford to maintain it, and were putting it up for sale through the Cooper Agency, with an auction of the contents scheduled for mid-November. We had suggested that they grant us a facade easement, but this has not been done. And yet there was hope at the beginning of November. A committee was organized to secure the house and acquire its contents, relieving the owners of the tax and maintenance burdens that had forced them, much against their will, to put the house on the market. The aim of the committee is not to create a museum, but to buy time while the means of doing so can be organized. The house has many friends, and their good wishes may yet prevail.

"Sunnyledge," a full-blooded brick Richardsonian house of 1886 by Longfellow, Alden & Harlow, stands at Fifth and Wilkins Avenue on a raised lawn: a familiar sight to many.



First Church of Christ Scientist.

Christian Science Church

We were informed, in mid-October, that the First Church of Christ Scientist is for sale. The building is a little gem in the Ionic order, situated at the bend of Clyde Street in Shadyside. It was built in 1904 to designs of Solon Spencer Beman, a Chicago architect of some fame. It fits beautifully into a small domestic street, a monumental building but so scaled that it does not crush the adjacent houses with its visible bulk. The realtors are hoping that it will continue in existence and that its auditorium, seating as many as 850 and including an "exceptional" pipe organ, will attract a performing-arts organization. The asking price is about \$1.5 million. Interested parties should reach:

Erik C. Wagner
Hanna Commercial Real Estate Services
Gulf Tower
707 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15219-1911
471-3311.

An Excellent Billboard Town

We read that Martin Media, the new successor here to Patrick Media Group, finds us "an excellent billboard town," with traffic flow inhibited enough to encourage absorption, or whatever it is, of advertising displays. We are now to get a "Las Vegas look, with neon, electronics, and motion." Will we want this? Henry Koerner could turn a colossal billboard image into a fantastic element in the scenes of Pittsburgh that he often found so fantastic otherwise. On the other hand, it would have been distinctly annoying in 1930 to see the side of Mount Washington a background for an illuminated Grennan's Cakes sign. The chances are that our landscape would be badly defaced by the antics of the new billboards, though in Pittsburgh at least the ordinance on signs may prevent the worst excesses. The sign ordinance is coincidentally under criticism from Pittsburgh community groups, and meetings were recently held by the City Planning Commission to receive public comment. These may promote a more stringent set of restrictions, which we believe to be all to the good, at least in Pittsburgh.

Landscape preservation has not received much attention locally, yet developers and advertising interests could degrade badly some prominent parts of our natural setting, and we should get used to the idea of features of the land itself as landmarks.

Another Landmarking Problem

On September 6, the Historic Review Commission found that landmarking of a house on Woodland Road had merit as an idea. The proposed landmarking was a refreshing change from other such instances of late in that it was done on the owner's initiative. However, some things about the idea have disturbed the neighbors. The house, built in 1984, is by Richard Meier, an eminent Post-Modernist whose ideas suggest the extreme Modernism of circa 1930. The house, along with its showy neighbor, a house by Robert Venturi, has had a great success of esteem among critics; on the other hand, neither house is exactly what red-brick and conservative Woodland Road is used to, and epithets like "White Tower" and "gas station" are current. Furthermore, the enameled metal cladding and other components have gotten into such a sad state in these few years that all the neighbors are disgusted. The owner blames the contractor, and the matter is in litigation. The attempted landmarking is an effort to save the house whatever happens, including the owner's being forced to sell.

In an HRC hearing on October 4, Richard Meier's letter on the situation was read; he argued *against* landmarking, saying that the present state of the house makes it "not a true reflection of my original design."



118 Woodland Road.

As to the quality of the design: we are cool toward Post-Modern architecture generally, but we remember a Society of Architectural Historians bus tour in 1985, everyone swarming toward the house and its Venturi neighbor. There can be remarkable fads in culture, of course, everyone wondering later what the fuss was all about, but it may be that even such a recent house, when so widely praised, and *if* it can be repaired, should be landmarked to save it from a present danger.

Our Neighbor Down the Road

Architectural Record's subscribers have elected "Fallingwater" the most significant work of architecture, world-wide, of the last hundred years. We who give tours have been used to visitors on a Saturday Pittsburgh/Sunday "Fallingwater" schedule, and have thus gotten used to Pittsburgh as a way station with "Fallingwater" the real object of the visit. Now Frank Lloyd Wright's weekend villa in Fayette County, built in 1936 for the Edgar J. Kaufmann family, may draw even more aesthetes to while away the time in Pittsburgh till the real experience begins.

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The engine awaits its setting.

Gift for Engine Setting

G. Whitney Snyder, W.P. Snyder III, and their family foundations have committed nearly \$200,000 to give the Mesta blowing engine, alongside the Smithfield Street Bridge, a proper setting. Built around 1900 to supply compressed air to a blast furnace, it weighs about 600 tons and stands 48 feet high, its flywheels wholly above the pavement instead of being partly below as was originally the case. The money will be used to paint the engine, develop landscaping and walks, and create interpretive materials. The donors have a long family association with Shenango, Inc., from whose Sharpsville, Pa. plant the engine came. We are grateful to them for the means of displaying this impressive artifact so well.

Archaeological Probabilities

The City of Pittsburgh has appropriated \$60,000 for consulting services to determine places in the Triangle, Oakland, and river-front areas most likely to repay intensive archaeological investigation. The areas are to be classed according to high, medium, and low probability of having archaeological resources of value. This will be done on the basis of research into land uses in the past, and is expected also to yield information about probable soil contaminants. Archaeological research is mandatory on certain sites developed with federal or State funding, a part of the review process for impact on those that are National Register-eligible.

Sewickley Heights Survey

Landmarks has been commissioned by the Borough of Sewickley Heights to supplement our work there for the Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey some 10 years ago. Forty new properties will be added. The total list will be of use to the Borough's Historic Architectural Review Board in determining which buildings are of architectural interest. Field work began in early October.

Nobody Sang Jingle Bells

One of the numerous objects given to the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation over the years is the sleigh in which the Biddle brothers and Mrs. Soffel supposedly fled from the Allegheny County Jail in 1902. Catherine Soffel, the Allegheny County Jail warden's wife, had freed the two brothers, who were awaiting execution for murder. The story remains one of the great Pittsburgh legends. The Pittsburgh Police Historical Association borrowed the sleigh from Landmarks this summer to display at the 75th convention of the Fraternal Order of Police, an organization founded in Pittsburgh.

Homewood-Brushton in the Journal

The September 17 *Wall Street Journal* had an article on community development corporations, focusing on the Homewood-Brushton Revitalization and Development Corporation and the enterprise of its director Mulugetta Birru. The article mentions his early success in getting rowhouses built despite a developer's walkout, the buildup of businesses to give the neighborhood a commercial center with new vitality, relations with more-than-skeptical bankers, and the opening of a farmers' market — even the acquisition of a radio station. As our last Newsletter indicates, our Preservation Fund has recently lent \$56,000 to further HBRDC's work through the purchase of one commercial building and two houses.

Regent Theatre Progress

The Pittsburgh Foundation has awarded East Liberty Development, Inc. a \$100,000 matching lead grant for its Regent Returns Capital Campaign, whose goal is to raise one million dollars for conversion of the Regent Theatre, a movie house of 1914, into a multi-use performing arts center. A third of the money, given by private parties or committed by the City and State, has been raised.

Rachel Carson Homestead, Springdale

The Rachel Carson Homestead Association has completed Phase One of its master plan, including the execution of a Historic Structures Report on the 1900-period house and statement of goals on the interpretation of Rachel Carson's life and career, expanded environmental education, and environmental advocacy. Earl D. James, formerly of Landmarks, is to become the Association's first executive director.

What the Syria Mosque Site Needs

In the October issue of PHLF News, we discussed the Syria Mosque site and the Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial group of which it is an element: and the need for a really good, harmonizing building to replace the Mosque. We have come up with the following guidelines:

General Intention: That the new building will contribute to the beauty and character of the ensemble created by the Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial, its lawn, and the buildings fronting on the lawn; yet, that the new building will be usefully planned, will have an appearance consistent with its plan, and will not be unduly expensive.

Character: The new building is to be visually subordinate to the Soldiers' Memorial; yet, it is to be an individually designed building, handsome in its own right, one that the public will wish to see.

Massing and Scale: No part of the building fronting on Bigelow Boulevard, either its east-west or north-south part, should rise higher than 45 feet as measured at the corner where the Boulevard changes direction. Any part rising higher should be set back at least 50 feet from the building line. No facade erected on or close to the building line should have a uniform, unvaried treatment or lie along the same line from end to end unless a treatment with this uniformity or evenness can be shown as satisfactory.

Materials: Brick, limestone, sandstone, and/or terra cotta, as used in the extant buildings of the Soldiers' Memorial group, should suggest the materials, colors, values, textures, mortaring, and other surface qualities of the new building unless alternative materials and/or treatments can be shown as satisfactory.

Style: The style of the exterior of the new building should be "Classical" in some manner, treated in a literate and sensitive way as regards proportions, materials, moldings and other decorative detail, and general effect, unless a non-Classical alternative can be shown as satisfactory. "Ironic" Classicism in the Post-Modern manner is not to be considered as the equivalent of literate Classical design.

Relation to Plan and Structure: Aside from obviously decorative details, the outer appearance of the new building should not deny, though it may not reveal, the plan and structure. Nor should the exterior impair in any significant way the convenience of the plan or the economy of the construction.

Motor Entrances: No loading docks or garage entrances may be placed on either portion of Bigelow Boulevard.

Planting: London plane trees must be planted along both portions of Bigelow Boulevard, and along Lytton Avenue where practicable, as they have been on University Place.

The wording reflects our belief that only a Classical design is likely to be adequate in this Classical ensemble, though we are reluctant to rule out good design of whatever kind.

THE CORNERSTONE

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Landmark Survivors

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This (Strange) Year in Preservation *(Continued from page 1)*

two derelict buildings. The attorneys then argued that: the lender for the Lazar project was a union pension fund that would not tolerate the old buildings; saving the buildings left fewer parking spaces than needed; no proposals for re-use of 901-11, including the Tripoli one, had any substance; the creation of a new project would benefit the neighborhood; the neighborhood is of no special character; and the waste of the developer's money in this arbitrary way violates his rights and warns off others. Such was the situation in early July.

Meanwhile, a Common Pleas judge ruled that the Syria Mosque demolition permit was valid, despite the Committee's suit of the previous month. The two-hour difference of March 26, in fact, was all the difference needed. The *Press*, on June 27, was quietly jubilant: "The Mosque isn't historic: it's history."

The Philadelphia Trauma

On July 10 came a trauma for preservationists all over Pennsylvania, an earthquake shock to historic preservation as practiced for a decade or more. In the case of *United Artists Theater Circuit, Inc. v. City of Philadelphia*, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled that the Philadelphia Historical Commission's designation of the Boyd Theater as a landmark, so as to compel its preservation inside and out, was a taking without just compensation. Justice Rolf Larsen, speaking for the majority, said in essence,

- that aesthetic matters were not within the police power of the State;
- that, though the owners testified in the PHC hearing on designation, the PHC was in the position of both judge and advocate;
- that the theater was under virtual public control after designation regardless of the owner's wishes;
- that, though the public was to be the beneficiary, the owner was to bear the sole cost; and
- that designation of one building amounts to "spot zoning" that allows the owner no sharing in a common good as ordinary zoning does.

In brief, Larsen found in the operations of the PHC a bad means to an end he admitted to be good.

HRC staff had recommended that designation of the Syria Mosque and 901-11 be recommended to City Council, but this new uncertainty inhibited any action on these matters. The day before the Supreme Court decision the City Planning Commission, despite recommendations of its staff and eloquent arguments by the public, had decided not to recommend designation of the Mosque to City Council. On July 23, its resolve weakened by the Supreme Court decision, the City Planning Commission voted not to recommend designation of the Bingham Street property.

Meanwhile, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court decision had created a national furor in preservation circles. Preservation law undergoes a constant series of adjustments, yet preservationists had felt basically secure on the taking issue since *Penn Central Transportation Company v. City of New York*, argued before a federal court in 1978. The July 10 decision, based on the Pennsylvania Constitution, may in fact have implications all around the state or even beyond it. The National Center for Preservation Law monitored the situation and cited other cases of relevance. The National Trust reported and discussed national implications in the September 1991 *Historic Preservation News*. On July 24, an *amicus* brief, "application to intervene and for reargument,"

was ready; Landmarks was one of the 12 signatories, the National Trust another. The National Center for Preservation Law, in the August 1 mailing, spoke of the need for statewide organizations and communication networks to provide organized mutual support against such emergencies.

On August 5 the attorneys for *United Artists Theater Circuit* responded to the *amicus* application, declaring that "petitions and *amici curiae* have advanced no compelling reasons justifying reargument of the issues which have already been determined by this court," and "the *amici curiae* are without authority or standing to file applications for reargument." Nevertheless, the application was granted by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court on August 23, with arguments to be heard October 23. This date would not see the end of the suspense; the leisurely processes of justice would probably not terminate in a decision until early 1992 (and this might not indicate its relevance in situations dissimilar to Philadelphia's).

Meanwhile, indecision reigned on the local level. The Pittsburgh City Solicitor, Mary Conturo, advised against City Council designation of the Syria Mosque and 901-11 as a possible unconstitutional taking unless compensation were paid. This was on August 1, at which time she believed that historic district designation would not be affected; four days later she was not so sure about the districts after all. It did not cheer things up when the owner of one of the 13,000 properties designated by the Philadelphia Historical Commission demanded \$2.5 million compensation.

John DeSantis, chairman of the Historic Review Commission, had been sanguine at first, pointing out two differences between our preservation mechanism and Philadelphia's: we do not designate interiors, and neither the HRC nor the City Planning Commission makes designations; City Council does this, and thus the advocates and the judge, so to speak, are separate.

Still, and despite Chairman DeSantis' attempt to keep it to its proper task, the HRC flinched at recommending either the Mosque or 901-11 for designation, and merely passed their staff reports — favorable — on to Council. This was on August 2; on the same day City Councilman Jim Ferlo nominated most of the undesignated balance of the Schenley Farms National Historic District, the Civic Center, as a City Historic District. HRC and City Planning Commission hearings were scheduled for November.

The Mosque Comes Down; 901-11 Remains

901-11 remained in its quiet and rather deteriorated state as summer ended, but

901-11 Bingham Street.



Demolition of the Syria Mosque.

matters were more critical for the Mosque. The demolition permit remained valid until September 26, and though the Mosque was still in the hands of the Temple Holding Corporation, National Development had obtained leave to begin demolition. A street fair that might include notables was scheduled for September 3 to rally support for preservation, even though the legal status of the effort seemed hopeless.

On August 27, actual demolition began with the removal of two of the Mosque's four bronze sphinxes and the elimination of a relatively-modern entrance canopy. Jim Ferlo and others, warned that this was to happen in the small hours, gained a modest reputation as "sphinx riders" who had to be hauled off, up, then away, so that demolition could continue. The first demolition was obviously a gesture indicating irrevocability: entrance terra cotta was partly destroyed, corner masonry bashed away, including more terra cotta, and part of a floor collapsed — *realpolitik*. Asbestos had to be removed before practical demolition could begin, but this was well under way late in September, just after failure of an attempt to have a State Court order issued to oppose it. The *Post-Gazette* published an editorial on the 28th to cheer the Mosque on its way.

Meanwhile, on September 10, a bill was introduced before City Council to extend the existing Schenley Farms City Historic District into the Syria Mosque site and the vacant lot to its immediate north. The apparent futility of protecting what was bound to be a big vacant lot was only superficial. Design control over the new building was what count-

ed, and continues to count, and as the site was the locale of a failed nomination less than five years old, the extension of an abutting City Historic District, rather like a windowshade, was the only way to obtain it. A medical office building on the site, or whatever it turns out to be, will be much bigger than the Mosque was, and in bulk and style could result in something quite fine, or be a stupid, vulgar intrusion into the ensemble centered around the Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial. Several parties began thinking along the same lines at the same time: there was *going* to be a new building; it had to be good; it would probably have to be Classical in order to fit in. This in mind, Landmarks published information on the present Civic Center, advocated a Classical new building by the ultimate client, Presbyterian University Health Systems, and solicited examples of executed designs by practicing American Classicists to illustrate what was necessary.

On September 10, the old Committee to Save the Syria Mosque of earlier in 1991 re-formed and enlarged itself as Preservation Pittsburgh, a "pro-active" group of people interested in preservation in Pittsburgh. Landmarks was curious, since the new organization seemed to intend things Landmarks thought it had been doing, but during early autumn attended Preservation Pittsburgh's meetings and contributed ideas.

If the summer ended with the Syria Mosque on the way down, 901-11 Bingham Street came into early fall neither repaired nor doomed. The City Council designated the buildings on September 24, despite developer threats of litigation and City Solicitor misgivings, and overrode a mayoral veto some two weeks later.

The consultants on the new City landmarks ordinance were due to present their draft on October 21, but in view of the prevailing doubt canceled their presentation until after the Supreme Court decision, in early 1992.

The Syria Mosque property passed into the hands of Presbyterian University Health Systems at the beginning of October. Two weeks later, National and the new owner filed a pre-emptive lawsuit against the City to prevent the proposed Ferlo annexation of the property to the Schenley Farms City Historic District. On November 1, the HRC voted not to recommend extension of the Schenley Farms District into the Syria Mosque site, doubting its legality.

This was the situation as of mid-fall, with the new year, among its many revelations, to tell us whether the state of historic-preservation law might remain fundamentally unaltered.

