

# ON THE WEST SIDE

THE UNIVERSITY CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



January/February 2021

<http://www.uchs.net>

Joseph Minardi, Editor

## Book Talk Series for 2021

The UCHS is pleased to announce its book talk series for 2021 featuring two local authors who will give virtual talks about their new books.

The first of the talks in our series will be by Whitney Martinko, Ph.D. about her book *Historic Real Estate, Market Morality and the Politics of Preservation in the Early United States*, published by University of Pennsylvania Press (Penn Press, 2020). Her talk will discuss a wide array of preservation projects undertaken before the preservation of George Washington's Mount Vernon in 1860--the traditional starting point for histories of historic preservation in the United States. In the decades after the American Revolution, a surprising cast of characters tried to secure the permanence of Indigenous earthworks, colonial buildings, battlefields, and family estates across the young nation. In the process, they shaped economic and social principles of capitalism and colonization that endure in preservation to this day.



Cover of *Historic Real Estate* by Whitney Martinko

Attendees who wish to order the book from Penn Press may use the promo code PP20 for 20% off.

Whitney Martinko is an associate professor of History at Villanova University and resident of the Cedar Park neighborhood and a UCHS member. You can learn more about her work at [www.whitneymartinko.com](http://www.whitneymartinko.com).



Cover of *City of Neighborhoods, Philadelphia 1890-1910*

The second talk in our series will be by Joseph Minardi about his new book *City of Neighborhoods, Philadelphia 1890-1910*, published by Schiffer Publishing. See the September/October issue of *On The West Side* for a full article about this book.

Joseph is a Board member of the University City Historical Society and current editor of their newsletter. Recently he has written articles on history for *The Local*. This is his fourth book.

The first talk will be on February 9th. The second talk will be on February 23rd. Details will be sent out by email and social media. Book talks are free and open to the public. Registration is available at <https://uchs.wildapricot.org/events/>

## New Board Member

We at UCHS would like to welcome Angela Kent to our Board of Governors. Angela has been living on the 4500 block of Chester Avenue since 2013. She recently started her own interior design business, Storyful Design. Angela's participation on the Board's activities has already proven beneficial as she was instrumental in completing a statement of goals for the West Philadelphia Interiors project.

We look forward to Angela's future contributions to the UCHS and the enthusiasm she brings to her work.

## Welcome to 2020's New & Reinstated Members

Sandra Thompson & Rebecca Baranowski\*

Patrick Bayer

Timothy P. Carey

Janet Cary

Erica Cornelison

Douglas Ewbank

Jeff Gauthier

David Golden

Marisa Guerin

Chonna Guevara

Angela Kent

Sean Kiley

Judith Lamirand

Corey Loftus\*

Whitney Martinko

Gail and Holman Massey

Mary Anne Domico & Frank Murphy\*

Matthew Myers

Michael Outten\*

Patricia Pate

Eric Cohen & Anne Pomerantz\*

Diane & John Pringle

Dexter Rose

Deidre Aaron & Jake Schneider\*

Philip and Jocelyn Scribano

Donald Stevens

Bridget Sullivan\*

Michele Supple\*

Maureen Tate\*

Clare Tjader

David S. Traub

Carlos Vializ

\*Award winner (*Gift to the Street/Outstanding Preservation/Preservation Initiative*)

### Giving Tuesday - the Paul Robeson House

\$600.00 was donated by UCHS members to support of the Paul Robeson House. UCHS thanks its membership for their generous support of this West Philadelphia asset.

Question? Ideas? Contact us at [info@UCHS.net](mailto:info@UCHS.net)

# Your UCHS Board at Work

## Planning and Initiatives in progress

The UCHS Board of Governors will be providing regular updates to the membership on our activities via the newsletter. Our November and December activities are summarized here.

### Finances

- Our Treasurer reports solid membership revenue for 2020 and growth of our invested funds.
- Total liabilities and equity are just over \$38,000, \$2,000 over the same time last year.

### Membership

- Fine-tuning of our new UCHS membership management platform is almost complete.
- A newly-formed committee is finalizing strategy and plans for a membership drive to begin in 2021. A goal of 100 new members during 2021 is the goal.
- Another newly-formed sub-committee is developing new branding and outreach programs for UCHS.

### Historic Nominations

The UCHS Board is monitoring, and has developed, along with contracted individuals and local leaders, a list of endangered properties. UCHS is in discussions with, and actively involved

reviewing and writing nominations for the following properties:

- 3701 Chestnut International House
- Hickman Temple
- 4200-30 Chester, south side of block
- Powelton Village Historic District
- Garden Court
- Saint Francis de Sales

### Committee on Diversity and Inclusion

We have formed a committee to address the cultural heritage of BIPOC West Philadelphia. New strategies for board diversification and community outreach are being developed in connection with this initiative.

### Outreach

- UCHS has raised \$600 for the Paul Robeson House.
- The Board is developing a new program, in connection with Drexel Library Science students, to develop content for a new West Philadelphia Interiors project.
- UCHS is developing a position statement and subsequent petition regarding utility meter placement requirements, especially as they relate to historic houses in the area.

## Ask the Experts

### PERPLEXING PAPERING PROBLEM

**Q:** Our 1895 Victorian house was remuddled with simulated wood panelling. When we removed one section around a doorway, the plaster pulled away from the lath. I am afraid that if we went ahead and pulled all of the panelling down, all the plaster would come with it. And we don't want to remove all the plaster and put up new wallboard.

**I have gotten two suggestions for wallpapering over the panelling. One is to put on a skim coat of joint compound, then size and paper. The other is to put up liner paper and wallpaper over that. What do you think? Would I be able to remove the wallpaper later?**

**A:** Wallpapering over composition-board paneling is problematic. The wallboard will expand and contract with changes in the humidity and cause the paper to blister. Unfortunately, this problem is unavoidable. A layer of lining paper under the wallpaper might help to take some of the stress, especially at the joints of the panelling. But the real determining factor for the longevity of your papering job is the temperature and humidity of your home.

A coat of joint compound is definitely a bad idea. It shrinks when it dries and so is unsuitable for the covering of large surfaces. Moreover, even with sizing, moisture from the wallpaper paste would resoften some of the compound and cause failures even before you could complete the job.

From *The Old-House Journal*, October 1981.

## Valentine's Tea Update

Due to the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Valentine's Tea and Awards will be postponed to a later date, possibly the spring of 2021. We encourage people to send us their nominations for Gift to the Street and Outstanding Preservation award recipients. We will give updates when they become available. Nominations can be emailed to [info@uchs.net](mailto:info@uchs.net)

## Did You Know?

With the construction of the Market Street Elevated, or the "el" in 1907, there was an accelerated need for housing in West Philadelphia. The apartment house, sometimes referred to as a tenement, became the chosen form for high density housing. Four- and five-story apartment houses were constructed on the few remaining undeveloped lots. These buildings, although different in character and density from the single, semi-detached and rowhouses of the period from 1850-1910, were forced, by the restrictions of lot size and dimensions, to fit into



*The Netherlands Apartments, corner of 43rd and Chestnut, 1909. Courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania Archives.*

the overall continuing pattern of development established during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The Netherlands Apartment (1907), 4300-4322 Chestnut Street, was typical of the new multi-unit apartments, but departed stylistically from some of its contemporaries.

Executed in the modern Beaux-Arts style, it was in stark contrast to the castle-like Stonehurst Apartments (45th and Osage), Sedgley Apartments (45th and Pine) and The Castle Apartments (901 S. 48th Street).

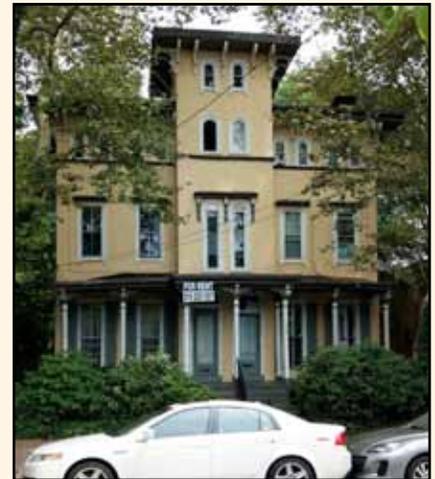
# Historically Building Nominations

Many thanks to Board member Kelly Wiles for compiling the following list of historically designated properties in West Philadelphia. We at UCHS are proud to declare that all but one of these properties were sponsored by us. And now onto the list;



**3701-15 Chestnut Street**  
**International House 1970**

Designated 12/11/2020, Nominated in partnership with DOCOMO US-Philadelphia



**315 and 317 North 33rd Street**  
**Marot-McIlvain Residence circa 1860**

Designated 6/12/2020



**5848 City Avenue**  
**The Chestnuts circa 1865-69, 1870-71**

Designated 11/13/2020  
Nominated by the Keeping Society of Philadelphia and the Overbrook Farms Club



**3412-14 Haverford Avenue circa 1850-53**

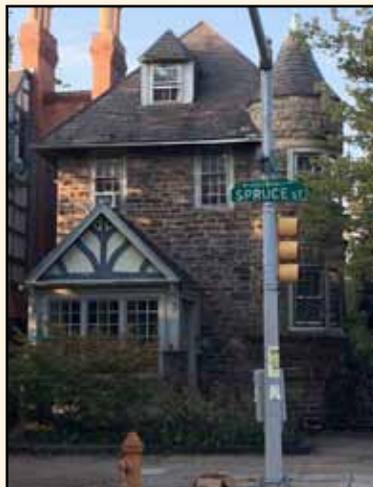
Designated 10/9/2020



**4017-21 Chestnut Street**  
**New Tabernacle Baptist Church 1896-7**

(now Christ Community Church of Philadelphia)

Designated 1/10/2020



**4501 Spruce Street 1885**  
Designated 1/10/2020



**4503-05 Spruce Street 1885**  
Designated 1/10/2020



**4507 Spruce Street 1885**  
Designated 1/10/2020

It should be noted that these properties on Spruce Street were all designed by architect Wilson Eyre, Jr. (1858-1944).

# ON THE WEST SIDE



## University City Then & Now: 5100 block of Regent Street



*Courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania Archives.*



*Photo by Joseph Minardi.*

Pictured here is a portion of the lovely Regent-Rennoc Court apartments on Regent Street west of 52nd Street. The complex consists of six three-story buildings on Regent Street and 1311-1327 S. 52nd Street, all designed by prolific architect E. Allen Wilson. Construction of these apartments began in April of 1910, with three identical buildings on the north and south sides of Regent Street and on the west side of 52nd Street. Each unit has large front porches and Wissahickon schist foundations. As seen in the photograph on the left, Regent Street was not yet paved when the buildings were completed.

By the first decade of the twentieth century apartment construction became in vogue in West Philadelphia, as the demand for living space increased dramatically. While many of these new apartments adopted a medieval castle-like motif, the Classical Revival style was chosen for the Regent-Rennoc Court. As noted in the National Register of Historic Places Nomination by George E. Thomas:

“...the buildings are of interest in marking the impact of the growing trolley car network, which raised land prices sufficiently to make flat houses a reasonable alternative in the ‘City of Homes.’ These are especially handsome in suggesting the monumentality and presence that could be attained and with the adjacent library that terminates the vista of Regent Street gives focus to its neighborhood. As one of the most impressive building groups by an important designer, E.A. Wilson, and a representative of the evolving notion of middle class design that helps clarify the achievement of the early twentieth century, the Regent-Rennoc Court deserves to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places.”

The Regent-Rennoc Court was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on September 12, 1985. At this time the buildings were in poor condition and in imminent danger of collapse. Thanks to an Historic Tax Credit, the apartments on Regent Street were successfully restored to their original magnificence.

### University City Historical Society

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