



# BELLEVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Belleville, Illinois

**MISSION STATEMENT:** The mission of the Belleville Historical Society is to promote awareness and appreciation of the history, customs, artifacts, architecture and people of the city of Belleville, Illinois. It strives to acquire, manage, and preserve artifacts, documents and real property significant to Belleville and to encourage preservation of the city's culture, history, and architecture.

## **LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT:**

I recently received a letter from Mike Lundy, Executive Director of the Southwestern Illinois Development Authority (SWIDA), who along with the Bywater Development Group repurposed the Hotel Belleville/Meredith Home into the Lofts on the Square. The City of Belleville planned to demolish the building in November 2014 but granted the old hotel a reprieve until May 2015 in response to the efforts of the BHS and other civic entities. With this additional time the building was saved. The City of Belleville agreed to sell the building to the public-private partnership of SWIDA/Bywater which proposed creating an apartment complex for retirement-age people of limited economic means. After completion of the \$14.2 million project, Landmarks Illinois named Lofts on the Square one of the winners of the 2022 Driehaus Foundation Preservation Award for "exceptional preservation efforts". The award included a plaque and a \$1,000 cash prize. In the letter, Mr. Lundy informed me that they were going to pass on to the BHS the cash award "as a token of gratitude for past and continued work maintaining the important historic properties of Belleville." We are very grateful for this gift, but even more grateful for the efforts of Mr. Lundy and his team to save a very prominent historic structure in our city.

Larry Betz

## **MEMBERSHIP:**

2023 membership dues are now due. Your dues represent an important part of our funding to support our buildings and activities. We hope you will continue to assist us in our efforts to preserve the history and architecture of our city. If you have not already sent in your dues please take a moment do so now. We need and thank you for your support.

## **BHS TRIVIAL NIGHT:**

A tornado threat forced cancellation of the society's Trivial Night benefit. It was rescheduled and successfully concluded on April 12. Looking forward to next year.

## **ZIP CODE DAY:**

On June 22, 2023, BHS participated in the one and only West End Zip Code Day (62223). WERC (West End Redevelopment Corporation) sponsored the event with these participants: The Abbey Restaurant, Fletcher's Kitchen & Tap, Tim & Joes Tavern, The Cheesekeeper, Cured & Cultured Restaurant, AJ's Smashed & Smoked Restaurant, Sage Style Consignment Shop, Foley's Tavern, Gift a Balloon Store, Fanatics Sports Bar & Grill, and the Museum of Mid-Century Modern Architecture (Blazier House). WERC provided a shuttle bus to transport guests from one venue to another. At the museum, the Post Office also provided for purchase special T shirts and 62223 envelopes with postmarks commemorating the event.

**2023 PAINT HISTORIC BELLEVILLE:**

The twelfth annual Paint Historic Belleville Art Event will be held on Saturday evening, September 23 ,at the Blazier House at 6 Oak Knoll Place. The auction has a new format and location this year designed to generate more interest. We have solicited artwork that represents selected historic buildings in Belleville from select Metro area artists. The doors will open at 5:30 for viewing of the paintings at the Blazier House with the auction beginning at 7:00. The event will be ticketed at \$25 each, which will allow you snacks and drinks (two alcoholic drinks per ticket) during the viewing period. If you purchase a painting, your \$25 ticket purchase price will be deducted from the purchase price of the painting. We will also be posting paintings on our Facebook page as we received them from our artists. The sites for this year are:

- |   |                                   |  |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| Trinity United Church of Christ                   | Pigs-in-a-Poke Drive In           | Philharmonic Concert on Abend Street     |
| Historic Ritz Theater                             | Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church | Wesley Drive Streetscape                 |
| 402 East Main ghost sign                          | Fort Conquer Christian Center     | Commercial Building (29 East Main)       |
| Lofts on the Square                               | 325 East Main ghost signs         | Ideal Stencil - East B and North Douglas |
| Chelar Tool & Die                                 | 404 North Charles 1860s residence | Glenview Drive Streetscape               |
| Charlie’s Tavern Mascoutah Avenue                 | Yoch Residence 930 East main St.  |  |
| Suburban Motors (former trolley power substation) |                                   |  |

Tickets available at Fletcher’s Kitchen & Tap (6160 West Main Street) and Circa Boutique (128 East Main Street). Check our Facebook Page or our website for forthcoming information.

**Summer Concert**

The band, “Red Jacket,” led by Alexander Ruwe, performed to a crowd of about 85 people on the lawn at the Blazier House on Monday evening, June 19. Nice weather accommodated, and everyone seemed to enjoy the evening.



**FALL CONCERT:**

On Wednesday evening, September 20, at 7:00, the BHS will be sponsoring a lawn concert at the Blazier House in cooperation with the Belleville Philharmonic String Quartet. Bring your lawn chairs and snacks and join us for an evening of great music.

**SPRING ART EXHIBIT:**

During May and June, the BHS sponsored an art exhibit of the paintings of the late David Cornell at the Blazier House. David was one of our original plein air painters who donated his talents to our “Paint Historic Belleville” Art Auction until his death in December of 2020. We are very grateful to David’s widow, Lynette, and son, Shawn, for their cooperation in loaning David’s artwork and setting up the exhibit.

**FALL PHOTO ART EXHIBIT:**

The BHS is sponsoring a photo exhibit of Midcentury Modern Architecture (MCM) in the St. Louis area at the Blazier House beginning with an opening reception on Friday evening, September 29 from 7:00-8:30. The exhibit will feature the photography of David Carriel and encompass approximately forty MCM structures. The exhibit will also be open to the public every Sunday afternoon from 1:00-3:00 beginning October 1 through November 26.



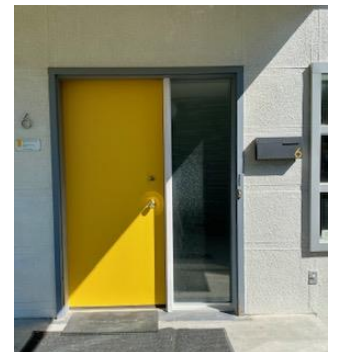
**DISCOVERY OF ANOTHER CHARLES E. KING HOUSE:**



In July it was brought to our attention that there was a previously undocumented Charles E. King house located in Swansea. The house was commissioned by Mr. & Mrs. Roy Wiebe and built in 1954. The house has been altered several times, but the new owner plans to bring it back to its original glory. This brings to 74 of known King houses and other buildings in the Belleville area.

**BLAZIER HOUSE IMPROVEMENTS:**

Sporting a new front door, the Blazier House continues to receive improvements that will eventually bring it to a level making it a destination for architectural enthusiasts. The house is currently open for tours on an appointment only basis. Call Margaret at 618/920-3261 to schedule a tour. Recently added to the house in addition to the new front door (in Charles King yellow), were new floors in the living room, food court, and kitchen. The next order of business will include new kitchen counter tops, new fascia on the carport eaves, and installation of the 1956 General Electric Wonder Kitchen. Stay tuned.



## PRESERVATION ADVOCACY:

The *Belleville News-Democrat* in recent months has run a series of articles on the pending demolition of buildings. The Belleville Historical Society has provided information to newspaper reporters on the histories of these buildings and their value to the community. As noted in our Mission Statement, part of our commitment is to help preserve the historic architecture of our city.



120 East Main Street



116 East Main Street



112 East main Street

Of What Use Is an Old Building  
By Robert D. Brunkow

Of what use is an old building? In a practical sense it can host an occupant. But that is only the beginning. An old building is a guidepost pointing to a community's development. The style of the building, the stories about its occupants disclose much about the values, experiences, and objectives of those who not only constructed the building but developed the city. The building fronts of 112, 116, and 120 East Main Street (above the cheap stucco first story) provide a case study demonstrating how buildings act as markers to reveal a community's story. They document the long period when Belleville was a regional commercial center.

The buildings are for sale. Their future is uncertain, but what is clear is that the city would be the poorer without them.

120 East Main dates to 1852 in the midst of the German migration to the United States and to Belleville. Shoemaker William Huff of Hesse Darmstadt, Germany, had the building constructed for his shoe shop. In Italianate style, it is a conjoined building with 124 East Main, which was built at the same time by another German, George Glanig from Bavaria. The two buildings share a wall, roof, and cornice. The style of window openings above the first story is the same for both buildings. Huff rented his upper stories to Glanig for Glanig's Illinois House Hotel. He later sold the building to Joseph and Edward Leopold, who were liquor wholesalers. Their business successor in the building, Dollus Brothers Shoe Store, became the leading shoe dealer in Belleville and occupied the building for 64 years, until 1988.

In 1926 local architects Frank Riester and Otto Rubach (architects for the original Belleville Township High School buildings) designed 116 East Main Street for I. Peskind and Sons, a high-end clothing store. The building was designed to "be a credit to the city" and "an asset to the beauty of the up-town business district." Even though the ground floor was savaged 10 years ago, the upper stories with their terra cotta details still project a time of prosperity and an anticipated well-to-do clientele. Isaac Peskind represents another wave of immigration to the United States in the decades around 1900, when Eastern Europe became a major source of immigrants. This wave included Jewish immigrants, like Peskind. In fact, during the 20th century many of the retail shops on Main Street were owned by Jews of Eastern-European background. Peskind's closed in 1975.

112 East Main exemplifies the presence of chain stores in Belleville—an early 20th-century phenomenon. In 1936 Sears and Roebuck hired local architects Otto Rubach and Lyman Weisenstein to design a new building that opened in 1937. The façade was more austere than that of the Peskind Building. It was built during the Depression for a less affluent clientele. The style is Art Deco. Sears closed the store in 1975 and moved to St. Clair Mall.

Even though these building fronts have already been severely altered, they still add value to the cityscape through their diverse architecture and witness to the continuing efforts to make Belleville a great small town. To lose them would be to commit community amnesia.

**WEBSITE/FACEBOOK PAGE:**

The Belleville Historical Society’s website at [www.bellevillehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.bellevillehistoricalsociety.org) provides information about our organization. It has a series of photo galleries that provide views of historic Belleville buildings—both existing and demolished. Also, check our Facebook page: [facebook.com/bellevillehistoricalsociety](https://facebook.com/bellevillehistoricalsociety). Both are updated regularly.

**MEMBERSHIP:**

Membership forms for the BHS can be downloaded from our website, [www.bellevillehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.bellevillehistoricalsociety.org) or by contacting us at [bellevillehistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:bellevillehistoricalsociety@gmail.com) or at 633 East Garfield Street, Belleville, IL 62220.

**DONATIONS TO THE BHS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED FROM:**

SWIDA	Azizat Danmole	Linda Weisenstein
Knipp Roofing	Carol Dillon	Anne Koleson
Rosemary Hankammer	James King	Lynne Cornell
Urbana Library	Jim Seitz	Estate of Leo & Helen Mae Shea
Steve Locy	Larry Betz	John Haggerty (Knipp Roofing)

**SUPPORTING THE BELLEVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY:**

As a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization, the BHS is authorized to receive gifts and donations that can bring tax benefits to the donor. Gifts to the BHS demonstrate support for the preservation of Belleville history. If you wish additional information, please contact us at [bellevillehistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:bellevillehistoricalsociety@gmail.com) or write: President, Belleville Historical Society at 633 East Garfield Street, Belleville, IL 62220. We welcome the opportunity to serve you.

**ADVISORY BOARD:**

Bob Brunkow - Historian  
Judy Belleville - Museum Advisor  
David Cox - Legal Advisor  
Katie McDowell - High School Liaison  
Margaret Meyer - Charles King Advisor  
Barry Moon - Procurement Officer

**BELLEVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY TRUSTEES:**

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Robert Brunkow  
Debbie Gain  
Ruth Heinemann Hertko  
Marilyn Dahm  
Don and Diane Wiggins  
Dr. Robert Quaas  
Frank Gundlach  
Christina and Jason Keck

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David Cox  
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Doug Gain  
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10th Street Baking Company  
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Great Clips (Ginger Miller)  
Precision Practice Management

Bank of Belleville  
Jefferson’s Restaurant  
Gary Thomas, CPA, Inc.  
Bridgeman Insurance Agency  
BRIC Partnership, LLC  
Jay Hoffman  
Weiss Monuments  
W. A. Schickedanz Agency

Blanquart Jewelers  
Picture Eye Gallery  
ROHO Corporation  
Papa Vito’s Pizza  
Jack Schmitt Chevrolet  
League Lounge  
Friday’s South Restaurant and Bar  
MPE Incorporated

**MASTHEAD PHOTO:** The painting of the Lofts on the Square/Meredith Home/Hotel Belleville by Gary Karasek will be one of the paintings to be auctioned off at the “Paint Historic Belleville” Art Auction on September 23 at the Blazier House.