



GIFFORD PARK'S PRIDE

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

FEBRUARY, 1993

NEXT MEETING:

FEBRUARY 4

7 p.m.

ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL -- DINING ROOMS A, B, & C

GUEST: Connie Eichhorn, Omaha 2000

CLINGING TO OLD VALUES WITH A VISION TOWARD THE FUTURE

In the days of the OLD WEST, when something needed attention, the town folk had a meeting and figured out ways to address the issues at hand. It was a matter of deciding what to do, who was going to do it, then doing it. Solutions didn't involve a three trillion dollar bureaucracy to compile data, do statistical analysis, and lobby for passage, then compromise, and ultimately come up with an inadequate watered down version of the initial intent.

We here at Gifford Park are all too aware of the needs of our community. We know, because we see, hear, feel, and we live from day to day with the neglect that residents of inner city neighborhoods like ours must endure. The symptoms of these inadequacies are evident everywhere. A community's inability to attract new business, compete for jobs, social, medical, and other needed services result in the economic, educational, cultural, and spiritual deprivation of an ever increasing number of its population.

Fortunately for this neighborhood, the GPNA, from its inception has set out to break new ground. With a vision toward the future, this association hasn't limited its efforts to urbane cosmetics like flashy new street banners and expensive flower pots. Let's face it folks, a pretty new dress on an unwashed, shaggy haired girl doesn't necessarily make her appealing.

The GPNA lunged forward gathering and distributing information to as many of our residents as we could reach. This self education process has proven to be the vital link to our success so far. But it's not enough to merely know what it takes to make the system work for us. In some instances the system doesn't work, no matter what you do.

Sometimes you just have to roll up your sleeves, get your hands, dirty, and do it yourself! Here is where the GPNA has played a major role, and will continue to in the future.

Admittedly, we can't FIX everything, and we won't PLEASE everyone ALL of the time; but what we can do, we will do, and we'll do it well, because we're doing it for our own, and no one knows what our needs are, better than our own. This is one good reason to become a member of this association, and by that I don't just mean buying a membership once a year, and perhaps attending a meeting once in a blue moon. Membership entitles you to a vote, and our newsletter once a month, but it also provides you with the opportunity to "DO" something worthwhile. Service to the community involves more than simply talking about what needs to be done, it entails WORKING for the common good.

Join us! Working together we can accomplish great things.

OFFICE UPDATE

By Vonda McEachern, Office Chairman

On Saturday, January 16, a group of people gathered at our new office space for clean-up and organization. Thanks to a few hours of hard work and a lot of "male-bonding," we were able to accomplish a great deal. After whittling down the equipment in there to just our office equipment, we spent some time arranging our office and conference space. Although it still needs a coat (or two) of paint and could use some carpet, it looks 100% better than it did! A special thank you to all involved—I appreciate your hard efforts.

Therefore, the office is now open for committee meetings or small gatherings. Please contact me at 341-7346 to book the room. We are planning on having an Open House on March 20, 1993. Look for details in a later newsletter. Also, watch for details on a painting party...don't miss the fun!

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Approximately 15 years ago the people in our community successfully rezoned properties West of 33rd Street so that those homes that are currently single-family dwellings must remain such and cannot be converted to apartments or allow group homes or multiple, non-related occupants. Because of this rezoning we have experienced a renewed pride of ownership and improved property values.

Most of the area east of 33rd Street is still zoned R-7 which allows property conversions, group homes, etc. Recently there has been much discussion and concern of over-saturation of group homes in the Gifford Park Neighborhood. GPNA is currently forming a committee to research this issue. **WE NEED YOUR HELP!** If you are interested in helping (even just one hour a week would be greatly appreciated), please contact Diane Reuss at 553-2312.

**GIFFORD PARK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Date _____

ANNUAL DUES -- \$5 (Single), \$8 (Family), \$25 (Business/Institutional)

****Please note: All new and newly-renewed memberships
will expire June 1, 1993.**

If paying by check, make checks payable to GPNA
Mail to GPNA: 3225 1/2 California St., Omaha, NE 68131

GPNA OFFICERS

President:
Ron Yates-558-6027

Vice-President:
John Lynch-345-9624

Treasurer:
Mike Caban-341-4722

Recording Secretary:
Judi Caban-341-4722

Corresponding Secretary:
Kathy Rose-341-3955

Standing Committee Chairs:

For Standing Committee members and chairs, contact Ron Yates, 558-6027

**REGISTER FOR THE 1993 SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM
ADMINISTERED BY JOB TRAINING OF OMAHA**

Registration begins Feb. 6, 1993

For more information

Call the Youth Division of Job Training of Greater Omaha at 444-4700

CENTENNIAL TRIBUTE

By Naomi Beck

For me, a beautiful, lovely old building is something to behold, ponder and romanticize over. Downtown parking, however, is not. Having waited for the snow to recede to allow my car to maneuver our street (1992 winner of Least Plowed of Gifford Park area), I set off for the Douglas County Civic Center to begin research on our home's early history. After circling the area numerous times, a parking spot surfaced on Harney Street, directly across from what was, until 1977, the Omaha Public Library.

Having satiated the parking meter, I stared long at the vacant building from my meter post. A sign, advertising "For Lease/Commercial" its most recent banner denoted an uncertain future. Built of brick and stone, central arched doorway flanked by flat columns built into the face of the wall and over the nine symmetrically placed windows were rounded relief panels, medallion-like, naming literary giants of antiquity. Still staring, looking for any passerby like a dreamer, the building held all the characteristics of an Italian palazzo, bringing back the words of a high school art teacher who first introduced me to Rome with words. Catching me off guard, I rushed to complete my business at the Registrar of Deeds and made a hasty trip to the present Public Library to research its predecessor.

The original Omaha Public Library at 1823 Harney Street, is having an uncelebrated 100th birthday this year. In 1891 Byron Reed, an Omaha real estate entrepreneur, left the property to the city. Reed made stipulations and conditions to his will that a library be built on the property within one year of probate and that the building would be totally fireproof. Often considered Nebraska's finest architect, Thomas Rogers Kimball (1862-1934) was commissioned by the city council, who, by a vote of the people, issued \$1,000,000 in bonds to begin construction. Kimball was architect for St. Cecelia's Cathedral, Monmouth Park School, Baird House, Fontenelle Hotel, the Black Museum and many other public and private buildings in the Omaha area, many of which are listed in The National Register of Historic Places. We can assume probate went speedily as the building was completed in 1893 (within the boundary of Reed's will) and opened to the public in 1894.

My library research revealed that the building, almost an exact copy of the famous Boston Public Library (want to guess where Kimball was while that was being built?), is in the architectural style of Second Renaissance Revival. From my view on Harney's north side, I thought the library had three floors but discovered it was built on a slope, the fourth level visible from the back. The city guides go on in great detail (often confusing in architect lingo): the interior features "an elaborate cast iron stairway and a double level iron book stack with glass floors." I wanted to know more about the woodwork, the moldings, the staircase with balustrades and window lintels. But none of these features were detailed and no pictures were provided of the interior. Perhaps that's where the romance comes in as we try to fill what is left to the imagination.

The loss of such beautiful old buildings continues in Omaha as it does everywhere, in spite of recognition through the National Register of Historic Places. They are destroyed through demolition, new development, fire, neglect and vandalism. Others are irreversibly damaged by ignorant renovators. One such building in Omaha was Jobber's Canyon- but I can't tell you about that one because it's already been lost and out of the updated (1989) Historic Register.

It's an abject lesson to realize that what we do to our homes in Gifford Park also plays an important role in Omaha's historical past and present. Several real estate "barons" on my street come to mind as needing a course in architectural purity for both cosmetic and investment sake. My own contribution to the historic charm of the area, still in its early stages, is small being just one single house but I'd like to think that others, too, might get the urge to restore, rather than renovate. We'd all profit by the experience, the adventure and the romance that is careful restoration.....food for thought, anyhow.

YOU MISSED IT*an editorial by Mike Caban*

Those of you who didn't come to last month's meeting missed a humdinger. I'm not going to go into it, but you should have been there. Dirty tricks, politics, back stabbing, bad mouthing, deck stacking, the works! Everything short of a fist fight broke out. The sparks were a flying! Wow! It was great!

What I will say, though, is that if you weren't there, you should have been. Your vote might have made a big difference. Your voice may have had an impact, and your point of view could have prevailed, if you had been there. But you weren't, and you missed a golden opportunity to exercise your vote.

It's too bad, too. It was an important issue, and now we must live with the results of a vote that perhaps would have gone the other way if enough of you would have come to the meeting, or maybe not. But we'll never know now, will we, because you weren't there. You missed it.

EDITORIAL CORNER

Readers are welcome to submit their letters for the Editorial Corner to any Executive Board member prior to the Executive Board meeting held the third Thursday of every month. The Executive Board has final approval for all editorials appearing in this section. Full name and address must be included on all letters submitted. The views and opinions stated are not necessarily those of GPNA or the Executive Board.

MEMBER MAKES THE NEWS*by Genine Hanna*

A fashion statement has been made within our neighborhood association.

Deb Mitzlaff was the feature on the front of the December 17th Living Section of the Omaha World Herald. If you saw the pictures, you may have been surprised that this is the same woman who attends the GPNA meetings as one of the OPS representatives.

When recycling your newspapers before you put them on the curb, you may want to notice the many facets of Deb in the paper.

One of the pictures was taken with her pet plastic flamingo. Deb requested if anyone in the association finds any plastic flamingos during the neighborhood clean up they save them for her.

GROUP HOMES*an editorial by Karen Kokensparger*

As evident from the January general meeting there is great concern over group homes in the neighborhood. Should more group homes be allowed in the neighborhood? Should the GPNA take action to prevent the location of more group homes? It appeared that the consensus of those attending January's meeting was that the location of new group homes should be limited and/or restricted.

The question then becomes what action should the GPNA take? Previous actions undertaken by the Executive Board concerning the location of St. Anthony House at 3126 Chicago St. were not accepted and voted down. It appeared through discussion that the decision to oppose the Building Board of Review's waiver of building code violations was not beneficial to the GPNA's cause (that of opposing the location of St. Anthony House). The filing of an appeal in District Court appeared to be a no-win situation. Even if the GPNA won the appeal, St. Anthony House could and probably would continue to be located at 3126 Chicago - if they corrected the building code violations.

My point - if the GPNA wants to oppose the location of more group homes in the area then let us choose our battle. When we find one that we can win and make our views known then let's go for it. Let's make an united effort - one that the membership as a whole knows about and supports. Let's continue to gather information on existing group homes and find out the zoning areas and laws. Then when the next proposed group home wants to locate in our neighborhood, we will know where we stand and what action — if any — can be taken. But let's not enter into no-win situations which could hurt the GPNA financially and publicly.