

April 25, 2023

7:00-8:45 PM

Meeting of COMO Preservation

Columbia Public Library

Friends Room

I. Call to order by Dianna O'Brien

The sign-in sheet was passed around and the following were present: Dee Wasman, Dennis Fitzgerald, Nina Sappington, Janice DeRosier, Pat Kelley, Scherrie Goettsch, Patrick Earney, Mary Kaye Doyle, Elena Vega, Dianna O'Brien, Chris Creasey, Tim Dollens, Jerry Benedict and Sarah Davis Seat.

Announcements

**\*\*COMO Preservation is now incorporated as of April 17!**

Non-profit status 501(c)(3)– donations tax deductible

\$400 would buy a logo.

Please sign up so we can record how many come to the meetings.

**\*\*In May we will be celebrating our 1st Anniversary!**

Our May 25 meeting will be held at the Blind Boone Home at 7:00.

Rev. Clyde Ruffin will be our speaker and lead a tour of the home. Rev. Ruffin is the pastor of First Missionary Baptist Church and was involved in the Boone house's rehabilitation.

Refreshments will include cake.

II. Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

III. Team Reports

Advocacy Report – The Advocacy Team's Task/Mission Statement: to encourage alternatives to demolition by providing information to property owners and protecting historic properties through discussion and engagement.

**What has Advocacy done:**

-Met with Deb Sheals to learn about legal options for property owners to protect their property from demolition threats. There are two options at this point: Local Landmarks and Historic Preservation Overlays. Both are property-owner initiated.

-Advocacy liaison Dennis Fitzgerald to HPC attends the monthly meeting and has created a spreadsheet of demolitions. In April, there were no notable demolitions.

How can you get involved?

**Task: Monitoring building plans at MU, Stephens and Columbia College.**

We need someone to keep an eye on the plans of the major property owners in Columbia, so we're not caught unaware of plans to demolish historic buildings. Advocacy's liaison attends the city's HPC meetings, but by the time a demolition permit comes before the HPC, it's too late to

help an institution make other plans.

**Task: Research other cities that have successfully saved historic properties.**

We need people to contact cities that we've identified who have either done a good job at preserving buildings, or are similar to Columbia. The goal will be to learn from their preservation efforts paying particular attention to cities with an HPC city commission and other organizations.

**Task: Create content about what the National Register of Historic Places is and how to get a property listed.**

**Task: Help create the content for an "Advocacy Toolkit."**

This toolkit will be available online for those interested in campaigning to keep a property from being demolished and evolve out of our work researching other cities that have been successful in saving historic buildings.

Restoration Report – The Restoration Team's focus is COMO Preservation Goal #4. Information to help support owners/residents of historic properties to preserve Columbia's historic properties.

-The Restoration Team will develop a Restoration Toolbox to share with owners/residents of historic properties. Information will include opportunities to obtain historic salvage to use in restoration projects, classes to learn hands-on restoration skills and a list of artisans/craftspersons with skills needed to help restore historic properties. The Restoration Team will develop a disclaimer for the artisan list with help from the MU Entrepreneurship Legal Clinic.

-The meeting for April 12, 2023, was postponed to allow the Executive Committee to meet.

-Volunteer needs: someone to investigate how other groups document their salvage and eventually someone to serve in the capacity of documenting the history of salvaged items (a salvage librarian). Please send in suggestions for our list of restoration contractors/specialists.

Executive Team – Progress report on the official creation of COMO Preservation.

4/17/2023: The Articles of Incorporation were submitted to the Missouri Secretary of State.

4/18/2023: The Executive Committee voted to approve and adopt ByLaws.

4/18/2023: COMO Preservation filed for and received an EIN with the federal government.

4/25/2023: Meeting with the MU ELC about filing for 501 (c)(3) status.

Cost - \$275 to file. We may hear back on status within 30 days.

Education Team – Met Tuesday, April 18, 2023, 5:30-6:45 PM at Eatwell.

Attendees: Dee Wasman, Julie Plax, Elena Vega and Chris Creasy.

-Next meeting: May 16, 5:30-6:45 PM in the café at Eatwell.

-Review Goals. COMO Preservation will become the go-to place for:

Goal 1: Information on the importance and benefits of historic preservation.

Goal 2: Information on the history of Columbia's historic buildings.

Goal 3: Information on how to advocate for historic preservation in Columbia.

Goal 4: Resources for historic property owners to encourage/support restoration.

Update on work for Goal 1:

Compiled 27 documents, articles, websites on the Importance and Benefits of HP.

We discussed the common themes that kept appearing in the resources.

### **We came up with these 4 Benefits of Historic Preservation**

1. Enrichment or Enriches a Community
2. Economic or Economic Advantages or Boosts the Economy
3. Education or Educational Opportunities or Increase Educational Opportunities
4. Environment or Environmentally Friendly or Supports the Environment

Information on the importance and benefits of historic preservation

- i. Website
- ii. Blog/Social Media Campaign (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram)
- iii. Print (signs, brochures)
- iv. Workshop to train members
- v. Train public officials on the benefits of preservation
- vi. Presentations with local community groups, K-12 students, etc.

Update on work for Goal 2:

Information on the history of Columbia's historic buildings.

Tours & Tour Guides

-Contact Brian Treece [treece@treecephillips.com](mailto:treece@treecephillips.com) (Reviewed Dianna's book)

-Contact Patrick Earney [pearney@gmail.com](mailto:pearney@gmail.com)

- Dianna (May) Movie theater tour

List of tasks that need volunteers:

- Event Calendar Manager
- Social Media Manager
- Content Writers
- Tour Guides

Historic Preservation Report – Dennis Fitzgerald  
Demolition of 4216 Mexico Gravel Road.  
Property owned by the city – donated to the city.

IV. Speaker – Dr. Nakhle Asmar, owner of the Neidermeyer Apartments since 2013.

“Neidermeyer 10 years later”

After he bought the Neidermeyer he realized how much needed to be done. Everything needed work! It is a 7,000 square foot building and just now, 10 years later, he is starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel. The Neidermyer is the “jewel of downtown” and needed to be saved from demolition. Articles have been written about it in The Missourian & VOX, New York Times and The Missouri Historical Review.

Background- Columbia founded in 1821. Richard Gentry was the first mayor in 1821 and became a Missouri Senator in 1826. He married Ann Hawkins in 1810 and they had 7 children, 5 daughters needed to be educated. 1833 charter for Columbia Female Academy. Feb. 26, 1837, the Academy Board purchased at lot (130 x 143 ft.) on Cherry St. for \$175. The school was originally a 50 x 50 ft. building, opened in 1838. That 50 x 50 ft building is still part of the present building. In 1839 MU was founded, the first public university west of the Mississippi River. In 1840 Mary Todd (Lincoln) visited the Academy to see her niece, Medora Todd (1830-1913). In 1853 the Academy had a peak enrollment of 122 students. In 1855 Columbia Female Academy closed and moved to what is now known as Stephens College.

Dr. Samuel Victor, a pharmacist, purchased the building in 1865 for \$1,415 and used it for a private residence and rental. In 1895 the Cunningham family purchased the property and opened the Cottage Hotel. In 1897 Frederick Neidermeyer, a graduate of MU law school, bought the building and enlarged it in two directions, making it an L shape. The original structure is the NE corner of the building. Mark Twain visited in 1902. He was attending a Phi Beta Kappa meeting held in the Gordon Hotel. He received an honorary degree from the university. In 1911 fire destroyed the University Domestic Science building and the university used the Neidermeyer building for almost 10 years to house the department. In 1920 the Neidermeyer was converted into apartments.

In 1960 Sabra Tull Meyer, famous Missouri sculptor, inherited part ownership of the building after the death of her parents. She was Mr. Neidermeyer’s granddaughter. She held onto the property until 1989. At that time, she sold it to Fred Hinshaw who continued to operate it as an apartment building with approximately 32 apartments.

In 2013 the Neidermeyer building was recognized as a Most Notable Property. Also, in 2013 there was a proposal for a new student housing complex and the property was put under contract for demolition. The demolition permit was issued.

On April 12, 2013, Dr. Asmar bought the building to keep it from being torn down. How did Dr. Asmar get involved? He contacted a realtor. It’s what he calls a “concours de circonstances”. There was a major outcry from Columbia residents and politicians concerning the demolition. Dr. Asmar’s mother had recently passed away. She had been a teacher in Beirut, Lebanon, whe

re she taught French and philosophy. She would have been interested in a school for girls.

Mr. Hinshaw allowed 1 visit, but no inspection. HPC walked around with him. Patrick Earney and Deb Sheals walked through. Hardly anything worked. It was in very poor condition. The original columns were gone, the porch was leaning forward about ready to collapse. The first thing to work on was the porch. (There were black and white kittens living under the porch, 2 stayed in the building and 1 is still there.) The mortar between the bricks was crumbly and could be scraped with a fingernail. It was terrifying! It took 4 men over 2 years to repair the brick & mortar. All the bricks were scraped and tuckpointed. Dr. Asmar wanted to keep the original look of the building. Many of the contractors who worked on the Neidermeyer thanked him for letting them work on the building. Painting the brick would hold in moisture. Originally the building had all wood beams, the building was sagging. The original beams were set on clay. They had to replace the whole foundation, supporting with 12 inch "I" beams on 6 x 6 concrete footing. For safety he installed a sprinkler system and fire escape.

Summary of work done since 2013

Replaced 18 layers of roofing, tin and wood shingles.

Built steel fire escape.

Rebuilt porch to original design.

Plumbed the entire building.

Installed a fire sprinkler system throughout.

Replaced all electrical wiring and separated the electric meters.

Installed double hung windows.

Eliminated the steam boiler.

Installed HVAC system.

Finished east wing of the attic into two additional apartments (4 bed, 2 bath and 3 bed, 2 bath units.)

Tuckpointed all brick and rock foundation one brick or one stone at a time. (It took a crew of 2-4 bricklayers 2 years to complete.)

Architects – Michael Goldschmidt and Bill Howell

If Mr. Hinshaw had allowed an inspection, he probably wouldn't have bought it!

\*\* Dr. Asmar would be glad to give us a tour.

\*Dianna would like us to post something on our website on this renovation.

## V. New Business

COMO Preservation received its first donation for membership from Tim Dollens!  
Donations were also made by: Mary C. Doyle, Chris Creasy and Patrick Earney.

Special Note:

Our next meeting will be May 23 at the Blind Boone House on Fourth Street at 7:00.  
It will be the First Anniversary of COMO Preservation!

Future meeting dates: June 20, July 25 and August 22 at the Columbia Public Library.