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# MEMPHIS HERITAGE

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## KEYSTONE

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July - August 2014 | Vol. 17. Issue 3

### Landmark Untapped - Tennessee Brewery Comes To Life

After the broker handling the Tennessee Brewery put out a release that the historic structure would be demolished if not sold by August 1st, MHI coordinated a community meeting on Jan. 23 at Howard Hall to brainstorm and gain feedback from anyone interested in the future of the landmark building. The meeting was facilitated by Former MHI Board member Ray Brown and very well attended. Concepts and ideas for possible uses were discussed and documented. One popular idea proposed at the MHI meeting was to create a sort of buzz around the property by working on a "prerevitalization" concept; opening the property for a month long use similar to the Pop Up businesses or like events created via MemFix.

Alas! This idea came to life in the form of an event called "UNTAPPED". A group of privately funded players including entrepreneurs Taylor Berger; attorney Michel Tauer; R.E. colliers broker Andy Cades and communications veteran, Doug Carpenter (with input from the Mayor's Innovation Delivery Team Tommy Pacello) created a plan to use the building as a beer garden from April 24 - June 1, with live music venue, cafe, retail outlet, and art performance center. The group obtained a temporary beer license for (in the spirit of the local nature of the event) only locally brewed beers from four companies to be sold.

The music began the first weekend with acts including Caleb Sweazy, Apollo Mighty, Josh Crosby, and Jeremy Stanfill. Furnishing the assorted accoutrements needed for the six-week long celebration were Montgomery-Martin, Sponsellar and McCary, Sashe, Cash Saver Foods, and the Memphis Botanic Gardens. These items included landscaping, building materials and labor, beverage equipment, furniture, and a mobile printscreening truck for merchandise creation and food sales. To accommodate neighbors the hours were limited to from 11 A.M. to 9 P.M. Thursdays and Sundays and from 11 A.M. to 11 P.M. Fridays and Saturdays. It coincided with the annual Memphis In May Festival that brings many thousands of people to downtown Memphis each year.



MHI is proud to have had a hand in this activity and looks forward to working with the owners and any person or group(s) interested in joining the cause to celebrate this community treasure and create a plan for a permanent future for this treasured building.

Now the brewery building is once again closed and empty. Hopefully, the owners will have the foresight to encourage its revival by working with potential buyers. What a loss if the building is demolished to no end when its relevance is so apparent and its drawing power so great for a variety of uses.

NOTE: Memphis Daily News, Memphis business Journal and Memphis Flyer articles were used to obtain some information in this article.

#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

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## Ashlar Hall - Update

In mid-January of 2014, it was revealed through the media that Robert (Prince Mongo) Hodges had quitclaimed his ownership of Ashlar Hall to Kenny Medlin. This despite the fact that the court, in agreement with Mr. Hodges, agreed that the property would be donated to a non-profit by working in tandem with Environmental Court and the City of Memphis. There is an ordinance that states while a property is involved in an active Environmental Court case brought by the Fire Department that a property cannot be sold or transferred. This situation exists regarding Ashlar Hall. While the Court did not nullify the quitclaim at the hearing, Judge Potter said he will work to prevent demolition of this irreplaceable icon and, instead, gave Mr. Medlin an opportunity to bring a plan back describing his capacity and a plan on restoring the building and what the use would be. At the second hearing in mid Feb., Mr. Medlin produced no plan so the Judge ordered that the quitclaim deed be voided and that the property still belonged to Mr. Hodges. The judge then set another hearing for Feb. 28 to review plans submitted by nonprofits wanting to restore the property. Two proposals were submitted at that time and on March

11, Judge Potter inspected the property to see for himself what needs to be done to protect it from the elements. A new court date of April 11 was set to assess the strength of the submissions by these two competing non-profits of their proposals.

In March, at the request of the City Attorney handling this case, MHI convened a committee of local architects and general contractors to review the proposals. This group submitted a written document for the benefit of the court to help determine both of these plans feasibility. The two plans reviewed were submitted by Urban Renaissance Initiative (URI) (Kenny Medlin), to become a center for veterans and the other plan by The Memphis Comic and Fantasy Convention. The Court did not make a decision as to which nonprofit presented the most effective plan. Based on the complexity of this case, the plan by the Memphis Comic and Fantasy Convention was withdrawn by MCFC's founder, Joe Thordason. Thordason has said he will look for another space to possibly set up the "Art Educational Center" that he proposed. The case is still in Environmental Court and Mr. Medlin continues to clean up the property and to make incremental repair. He still has to be able to provide a substantive financing plan to complete the project. For the latest updates go to the Facebook page Save Ashlar Hall.

## UPDATE - RowlandDarnell Home (19th Century Club)

Up until June, the current owners of this property were investigating restoring and reusing the historic Rowland Darnell Home at 1433 Union Ave. or possibly selling to someone who would restore the home. The Lins (owners) hired an architectural firm to create plans for restoring the property into a restaurant. These plans were bid by a local contractor. Because of the projected price, the bank involved in a possible loan transaction asked for a second bid. We have recently learned that the Lins no longer have plans for restoring the property.

Unfortunately, in April vandalism exposed the west entrance to weather/intruder invasion. The breach was not discovered for several weeks and it is feared more damage was done to the interior.

Meanwhile the case is in the Tennessee Court of Appeals in Jackson, TN. Briefs for the appeal of Judge Evans' ruling by a longtime standing member of the 19th Century Club have been written.

MHI appreciates all the donations that were generously given to assist with the appeal and continue the efforts to help save this historic treasure.

Attorneys Steve Mulroy and

Webb Brewer are providing their services pro-bono. We cannot thank them enough for their amazing dedication to this case and our community.

## Tax Dead Property? 299 CHELSEA

The status of this old Memphis church building located at 299 Chelsea in North Memphis is so dire, according to the local taxing/assessor authority that it is listed as "Vacant Land" on the tax records. That, despite the fact that the building pictured above still stands where it has for well over 100 years. The building, known by various names (including 7th Street Baptist Church) over the years, is abandoned and deeply indebted for back taxes amounting to much more than the land/building are worth. The value placed on the lot is \$3,000. But the Catch-22 scenario that would allow a purchaser to redeem the property is the most interesting part of this story. This property was deeded in 1859 to the Third Presbyterian Church of Memphis and the church was erected in 1860, just before the Civil War began. The minister, Rev. Edward Porter, entered the Confederate Army in 1862. Per-



## MEMPHIS HERITAGE KEYSTONE

The Keystone is a publication of Memphis Heritage, Inc. Memphis Heritage's mission is to stimulate an appreciation for our heritage and preserve historic places. Our offices are at 2282 Madison Avenue. You can write to us or call us at 901-272-2727. Or visit our website at [www.memphisheritage.org](http://www.memphisheritage.org).

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haps in retaliation, it is widely accepted that the Union Army, having occupied the city, stabled their horses on the ground floor of the church, (cont on p.6)....

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## St. Thomas Church Windows To Be Salvaged



### "Splendor in the Glass"

By Charlie Lambert

Old St. Thomas Catholic Church at Trigg and Lauderdale in old South Memphis still stands after almost 100 years (the church was dedicated in 1924 as part of the Nashville Diocese). Not a functioning Catholic parish since the late 1980's, St. Thomas was home to Baptist and COGIC congregations until the mid 2000's. The land and building belong to the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) now, but has not been used for several years as anything but the guardian for 28 of the most wondrous stained glass windows that exist anywhere in the city. One quarter of the roof has caved in, there was a fire by arson, looting and vandalism combined with harsh weather has taken its toll over the years. COGIC inherited the dilapidated building, yet, miraculously, the windows are almost perfectly preserved after a 100 years of exposure. The next step in their journey back to prominence depends on several factors. The spirit of former parishioners is willing, but the funds to execute are waning. The good news is these treasures have been put in a safe place until their next debut. The windows will not be lost as has been feared by many in the city

who attended the church and school at St. Thomas in the past. Engineer Michael Lloyd, who describes himself as the volunteer project manager for the window project, says that it is miraculous that all of the windows have survived over the years of exposure. He is particularly thankful that the recent removal of the windows from the crumbling building was accomplished without any breakage or damage. Lloyd attributes the success to RainbowStudios' Suzy Hendrix, its owner Dan Oppenheimer, and their expert crew. Their care and expertise produced a flawless transition of the Mayor of Munich windows to the storage/restoration area in just six days (they rested on the seventh day). Other than a few bullet holes in the glass and some old lead, the color and condition of the windows is remarkable. Lloyd pays high tribute to the groups that have been involved in this project. He says Bishop David Hall and Pastor Kendal Anderson of COGIC could not have been more supportive. Individuals & industry, blacks and whites, Catholics & non-Catholics, and everyone else as far away as Alaska who has some connection to St. Thomas are the reasons we are succeeding. The key element going forward is the

money. Funding will support the ongoing restoration costs and allow additional artifacts to be removed from St. Thomas. Things like cornerstones, commemorative objects, marble steps can be saved and the Heart Pine beams and decking along with the bricks can be repurposed. Bishop Hall and Lloyd have a dream to partner with a non-profit to create a medical center. Ideally, they would use the land, and perhaps part or all of the building as a hospice, day clinic, or other community facility for the people in the South Memphis area. He hopes to interest Baptist or Methodist Hospital in becoming a partner in the reincarnation of the St. Thomas plot. Such a project would involve millions of dollars, but without dreams nothing would ever happen. Mr. Lloyd was baptized at St. Thomas and his father, Cotton Lloyd, was a married there and coached there. St. Thomas was a mission parish of St. Patrick's Church at Linden and Fourth Streets. St. Thomas, in turn, was a sponsor of the St. Paul Parish in Whitehaven. The lineage of many parishes in the Memphis area can be traced to sponsoring parish like St. Thomas. This process includes thriving parishes like St. Louis and St. Francis, among others. Many of

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the Memphis Catholic community can trace a family member or friend back to St. Thomas. As for the future of the windows, once cleaned and restored they will be used in a planned, new Catholic Church five minutes from Collierville in Byhalia, MS. The plan is for that church, as yet unnamed, to be built in the next two years. The new church will have a tribute wall or area honoring St. Thomas and its parishioners. The windows will have new name plates recognizing the current donors who are paying for preservation work. The names of the original donors will also be acknowledged in a newly commissioned stained glass display of the nameplates. No matter your passion, Art, History, or Spiritual, these magnificent works invoke a special place in the hearts of the viewer. Among the faithful, they bring the Gospel to life in an original HD experience. To many, they are of great sentimental value as the windows have watched gen-

erations come and go. However, their real value is the inspiration that they have provided to those generations. Individuals known to Michael Lloyd personally have shared their fondness and inspiration for the windows. He said that his lifelong friend, Archbishop Peter Sartain of Seattle, attributed a part of his inspiration to become a priest to the windows' effect on him as a young man. Dr. Ralph Franceschini attributes the window depicting Jesus as the Good Samaritan inspired him to become a doctor helping children. That makes these windows more than objects of art or historical treasures; they have sacred qualities as well and future generations will be served well by their preservation and display for another 100 years. Donations and other questions about the windows project may be directed to StThomasMemphis@gmail.com. Also look at the Facebook page entitled "Memories of St. Thomas Catholic Church Memphis".

Thanks to Michael Lloyd for his contribution to this article.

## HISTORIC DESIGNATION: The Pinch in a Pinch

One of Memphis' most historic districts, The Pinch, located on North Main Street and its environs is undergoing continuing blight and demolition of its old structures. The area that was once the original core of the city of Memphis, where local businesses and financial activities thrived when Memphis was young, now boasts only boarded up building and empty lots for the most part. Just a few weeks ago, yet another historic structure at 405 N. Main was razed. There is nothing surprising about that except that, as a consequence of the continuing loss of its historic character, the area will most probably lose its designation as a Registered Historic District and along with that, the tax credits that would make locating or renovating buildings there more

## Memphis Properties in Limbo:

1. The Nineteenth Century Club (see ADDENDUM UPDATE)
2. Justine's Restaurant Building
3. OldMarine Hospital on The River
4. Old Tennessee Brewery (Article)
6. Sterick Building
7. Ashlar Hall (see ADDENDUM UPDATE)
8. State Office Building on Mall (downtown)

attractive to developers. But that is just the tip of the iceberg. The likely withdrawal of historic distinction by the state of Tennessee, expected later this year, takes away forever the ability of that area to recover the beneficial historic distinction it has held since 1979. At the time it was named to the National Register of Historic Districts there were approximately 43 buildings that met the definition of "contributing" to the historic distinction for various reasons. Today the number is in the low 20's and likely to decline further if the current trend persists.

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The only safety net left is for individual projects that specifically designated historic structures in the area can still receive tax credits for their renovation if all the necessary paperwork is filed. However, the overall area itself will no longer derive any tax benefit from new construction or renovation. Bizarre considering the multi-million dollar revamping of the Pyramid into a Bass Pro Shop just a roadway away from the district (this sentence seems choppy or fragmented). It appears to be a "Catch-22" situation wherein the district continues to decline as the Pyramid comes back to life. If and when Bass Pro achieves success, the Pinch may possibly become a more popular place for enterprise. That, however will not bring back the district-wide tax incentive it enjoys now. One linchpin is the proposed hotel promised as part of the Pyramid-Bass Pro project. Should some optimistic entrepreneur(s) decide to construct that hotel adjacent to the Bass Pro project, in the Pinch itself, such action might signal renewed confidence in the area. At present the hotel is expected to be part of the Bass Pro project's second phase and be located somewhere within the Pyramid. Nothing is set in stone yet. Memphis has some 36,000 build-

ings on the National Register of Historic Places, making it number six in the nation for such structures. The Memphis Landmarks Commission, a board of nine people, is involved in designating "landmark districts" within the city. Some of these are Central Gardens, Annesdale, and Evergreen-Vollintine. The commission does not control "national" designations such as the Pinch has at present. Those come from the Department of the Interior, through the Keeper of the National Register, and then to the state involved. While a national designation has little pervading authority it carries the prestige of its recognition and the all-important 20% tax advantage for new construction/renovations. One might ask why the South Main Arts District seems to be flourishing as the North Main's fortunes decline. Nancy Jane Baker, Landmarks Manager for the Memphis Landmarks Commission, thinks that there is a cohesion among the developers and business owners on the south end of the street, an "appreciation for what they have" that, unfortunately, has not been developed at the other end of the street. Only time will tell whether a major commercial enterprise such as Bass Pro will light a fire that will cause The Pinch to



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come alive again as a vital part of the downtown scene. Let's hope that is the case. What a shame if the area were to end up as a parking lot for the community around it. Many thanks to Nancy Jane Baker for her insights and help in making this article possible.



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(cont from p.2) and operated a hospital on the second floor. In 1974, the Presbyterians sold the Church to the Centennial Baptist Church, the present owners. The building was abandoned, somehow incurring taxes of some \$902 and assessments of a whopping \$248,000 or so for failure of upkeep. The City and County legislative bodies have passed resolutions seeking to circumvent an apparent legal ban on forgiving back taxes by participating in a State program that might permit grants, which could be used by a Community Development corporation or other non-profit to pay said taxes and assessments if they restored the property. The matter is before the State Attorney General for his approval as to constitutionality. This is a property literally in limbo!

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We have an exciting announcement to share with our members! Memphis Heritage Inc. (MHI) is partnering with a new Memphis-based technology company called GWIG, which stands for Go Where I Go. GWIG's community partnership program, GWIG Gives Back, helps to strengthen local communities through growing local businesses and nonprofits.

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### ROWLAND DARNELL HOUSE (aka 19th cc)

#### CLEAN UP

Lila Gordon, Tara Gordon, Hall Prewitt, Sean Corlew, Curry Roberson, Stephanie Wexler, Nigel Price, Deborah Simpkins, Mary Hendrix, Brian Swope, John Padavic, Jessica Miller, Mark Bieber, Gordon Alexander, Larry Chan



MEMPHIS HERITAGE

PRESERVATION...IT'S ABOUT TIME

Join Memphis Heritage  
And help us give  
our Past a Future!

Memphis Heritage is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our operational dollars come from memberships and private donations. We do not receive any funding from local governments.

### YES!

I Want to join Memphis Heritage and help preserve Memphis and Shelby County!

When you join Memphis Heritage, you will receive The Keystone, a free copy of the annual Memphis Heritage calendar and notice of all special events. Members are offered early registration to many of our events, and are also entitled to vote in the annual election of board members and officers.

Donations to Memphis Heritage are tax deductible to the extent the law allows. Please check with your tax advisor.

#### Individual/Family Memberships

Individual	\$35	Donor	\$100	Conservator	\$600
Friend or Family	\$50	Patron	\$250	Student/Senior	\$25

#### Corporate Members and Major Supporters

Please call us to arrange, thankyou!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

YES! I want to get involved as a volunteer for Memphis Heritage! Please contact me with more information.

Please mail this with your check to:  
Memphis Heritage, Inc. / 2282 Madison Avenue at Edgewood / Memphis, TN 38104

Or phone us: 901-272-2727 (phone) / 901-272-0148 (fax)

Or join online at [www.memphisheritage.org](http://www.memphisheritage.org) using PayPal.

We also accept VISA and MasterCard.

Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ CSV: (3 digits)

**JOHN GRIFFIN**  
INCORPORATED

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN CONSULTANT

RENOVATIONS & ADDITIONS & GARDENS

194 LOONEY AVE. MEMPHIS, TN 38107

**901.581.3290**

## THE KEYSTONE TRADING BLOCK

### HISTORIC PROPERTIES MARKET

Name	Address	Listing Price	Approx ft <sup>2</sup>	Year Built	Style	Realtor Contact
Dermon Building	46 N. Third St	\$1,900,000	95,000+	1925	Renaissance Revival	Jerry Couloubaritsis, (901)761-4444
Tennessee Brewery	495 Tennessee St	\$1,200,000	60,000	1890	Romanesque Revival	James Rasberry, Rasberry CRE (901)722-8234
Old Memphis Humane Shelter	463 N. Front St	\$ 950,000	6,771	1936	Art Deco	Gary Garland, Garland Company (901)527-7779
Ashlar Hall	1397 Central	this property is in the courts. It will be donated to a non-profit for future development. More information will be available soon. See "ADVOCACY ADDENDUM" this issue for more details.				
Clayborne Temple	294 Hernando St	\$ 600,000	20,000	1891	Romanesque Revival	Sam Mitchell, KW Commercial (901)569-2307
Bradford-Maywell House	648 Poplar Ave	\$ 159,000	3,785	1859	Federal with Italianate details	James Rasberry, Rasberry CRE (901)722-8234
Elam Homestead	1428 Fox St.	\$ 31,000	3,600	1840	A recent foreclosure for sale by Movoto Real Estate , 888-766-8686, More details next issue.	

The Memphis Heritage Advocacy Committee is looking forward to working with property owners, agents and buyers. Our goal is to act as liaison with all interested parties in order to prevent inappropriate demolitions and work toward proposals that will be favorable to historic properties. If you would like to promote your historic property for sale via The Keystone, or are interested in a property from our listings, please contact our office at 901.272.2727.