Dayton’s Bluff Spring Vacant Home Tour

This beautiful double house at 732-4 East 5th St. was on the 2008 Dayton’s Bluff Spring Vacant Home Tour. It was later purchased and is now home to two new families. Join us this year on May 17th and see what sort of neighborhood jewels are on this spring’s Dayton’s Bluff Vacant Home Tour. Photo by Karin DuPaul

Dayton’s Bluff Vacant Home Tour will be held on Sunday, May 17. It will showcase some of the vacant homes in our neighborhood and, hopefully, find buyers for them. Six homes will be featured on the tour. Pick up the map with the location of the houses between noon and 5 p.m. at 798 East 7th Street at the corner of East 7th and Margaret. Come early and ride on a Vintage Twin Cities Transit bus.

Realtors and bankers will be on hand with information and to answer questions. Also open during the tour will be several of the homes in the 4th Street Preservation Project. Information about that project will be available at the beginning of the tour.

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The Vacant Home Tour is a project of the Dayton’s Bluff Vacant Building Committee (DBVBC), which featured two successful tours last year. The tours brought over four hundred people to look at Dayton’s Bluff to look at vacant homes last year. Of the twenty homes on tours last year all but two were sold. The home shown in the photo above was one of the houses on the tour that was later sold. The DBVBC was formed in 2007 just as the early fallout from the sub prime crisis began to emerge. Initially, the group’s goal was to provide neighborhood input on the city’s decisions when to (or when not) to demolish vacant properties in the Dayton’s Bluff area. The idea was to stop the demolition of vacant properties just because they were vacant.

The Dayton’s Bluff Vacant Home Tours are an alternative to vacant house demolition. Homes of all sizes, some in move-in shape, some in need of a lot of work will be included on the tour. The tour will feature a wide range of these homes and it is an opportunity to see the options available in our neighborhood.

The Vacant Home Tour will be on Sunday, May 17. Anyone who would like to help out with the tour or get involved with the Dayton’s Bluff Vacant Home Committee is welcome to join. We need your help. Please contact Karin DuPaul at 651-772-2075 or Karin@daytonsbluff.org.

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A helping hand
Do you need assistance fixing up your home, apartment or yard? What if I told you that, “Help is on the way”? Believe it or not, you might want to give this a shot.

There is a service-oriented program called, “Urban Servants.” An established umbrella of Camp Kingswood—which is a United Methodist camp & retreat center—Urban Servants undertakes projects relative to home maintenance and structural rehabilitation. It therefore collaborates with churches, homeowners and landlords to improve living conditions for individuals and families.

While adults work on and supervise designated tasks, the bulk of its workforce is composed of youths (middle through high school). Some past successes of the program include building ramps and decks, redoing concrete steps and walkways, minor repairs and remodeling, flooring, painting, window washing, yard work, etc.

Homeowners, landlords and even local businesses are highly encouraged to take advantage (proper & honestly) of this instrumental community service. Through these heartfelt collaborations we will contribute to healthy living conditions that are foundational to a sense of belonging, care, safety, personal development and much more.

Submit your home service request to Al Mitchell before May 23rd, 2009 at Mounds Park United Methodist Church, 1049 Euclid Street. For more information contact Al Mitchell, Children & Families Outreach Coordinator at 651-774-8736.

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New city ordinance complicates rehab of vacant homes
By Nick Duncan
As spring arrives on Dayton’s Bluff so does a new round of open houses and home tours designed to bolster the faltering local real estate market. Dayton’s Bluff has been hit especially hard by the burst of the nation’s real estate bubble. The proliferation of homes and home tours designed to bolster the faltering local real estate market. Dayton’s Bluff has been hit especially hard by the burst of the nation’s real estate bubble. The proliferation of homes.

Category 3 vacant buildings are structures that are in need of some repairs to make code. Category 3 vacant buildings are structures with major problems that are past redemption and are in line to be torn down.

Neighborhood groups like the Dayton’s Bluff Vacant Building Committee (DBVBC) have organized to address the issue. Last year the DBVBC held two very successful “Vacant Home Tours” which spotlighted the high quality, low cost vacant homes available for purchase in the neighborhood. People came from all over the metro area to see what our neighborhood had to offer. A number of historical and unique Category 2 vacant homes where purchased by rehabbers and recyclers have invested their hard work into making our neighborhood a better place while maintaining its rich history.

These Category 2 vacant homes were purchased by folks who were willing to trade sweat equity for high mortgage payments. Theses rehabbers and recyclers have invested their hard work into making our neighborhood a better place while maintaining its rich history. These are the kind of neighbors our city is looking for.

On Sunday May 17th the DBVBC will be holding another vacant home.

“Ordinance” continued on page 7
Old Eastside church blossoms

By Lou “The Photo Guy” Michaels.

Shelia Raye Charles, recently spoke and sang at the new Immanuel City of Refuge Healing Temple at 815 E. Frank St. Promoting her book “Behind The Shades,” she is a frequent speaker at prisons, providing her own personal story and message of hope. To learn more about her, visit www.sheliarayecharles.com.

Pastor Henry L. Block leads Immanuel City of Refuge, along with his wife evangelist Ethel J. Block. Pastor Block hopes to encourage people to attend the church by passing out tracks and bibles in the community. Service times are: Wednesday Prayer at 7 p.m., Friday Bible study at 7 p.m., Sunday School at 10 a.m., and Worship Service at 11:15 a.m. They will begin offering a free community meal at their church in April.

Pastor Block wants everyone to know that they are welcome in the church. It doesn’t matter what color or race they are. Pastor Block is inviting all to come and worship with them. For more information call 651-771-0047.

Dayton’s Bluff
Annual Spring Dinner

The Dayton’s Bluff Annual Spring Dinner will be held on Saturday, May 16. It’s our neighborhood party that moves from location to location! We are looking for participants including hosts and homes to be our buffet dinner sites. Ideally, the event will be divided into three events: appetizers, desserts, plus one home for the all participant session that is the finale.

Last year we had about 50 people attend. It’s a great way to meet, greet and mingle with your neighbors! Participants should be 21 years old and up and a resident of the Dayton’s Bluff neighborhood. Interested? Contact Margy Smith, event coordinator, at 651-778-1075.

Sixth Annual Plant Sale
and Exchange

The Sixth Annual Greening Dayton’s Bluff Plant Sale and Exchange will be held on Saturday, May 16, from 9:00 a.m. to noon at the corner of East 7th Street and Bates in the gardens outside the Swede Hollow Cafe. Plants for sale will include perennials and annuals.

If you have plants in your garden that you have too many of or do not like any longer, bring them to the plant exchange and take home something you would rather have in your garden. For more information contact Karin at KarinA@DaytonsBluff.org or call Karin at 651-772-2075.

Dayton’s Bluff Community Meeting

The Sixth Annual Greening Dayton’s Bluff Community Council, 798 East 7th Street at the corner of 7th and Margaret The Dayton’s Bluff Community Council holds its Community Meeting on the 1st Thursday of each month. The purpose of the meeting is to work with block clubs and neighborhood residents on problem properties, criminal and nuisance behavior, code enforcement issues and any other neighborhood issues, concerns, and/or new ideas for improvement in Dayton’s Bluff.

If you can get me the addresses of problems ahead of time I can get them to the police and code enforcement. Then they can bring information about the problems to the meeting. All Dayton’s Bluff residents are welcome to attend.

For more information contact Karin at 651-772-2075.

Meet with the police

The Eastern District Police host their monthly meetings for community members at 722 Payne on the corner of Payne and Minnehaha Avenues. One is on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. and the other on the third Friday of each month at 9:30 a.m. In May the meetings are on the 20th and 22nd.

The meetings are intended as a time to listen and address people’s concerns about crime and other issues on the East Side.

Dayton’s Bluff
Preservation Evening

The Dayton’s Bluff Preservation Evening is being held on Tuesday, May 5, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Metro State/Dayton’s Bluff Library 645 East 7th Street in room 302.

Come and hear about home preservation and repair in Dayton’s Bluff. Learn about the East 4th Street Preservation project and other Dayton’s Bluff home repair projects.

Many neighbors have had extensive experience preserving and repairing their homes. Some of these neighbors will be on hand to show the improvements they have made to their homes and show before and after images. Have a home you want to preserve and research and don’t know where to start? Have you repaired or restored your home? Redecorated a room? Rebuilt a porch? Or done any other home project? We are asking residents to bring their stories, pictures, picture boards, scrapbooks, etc. on big and small home repair projects to share.

For the last six years residents have brought photos, picture boards, and stories about kitchen, bathroom, porch, whole-house and many other projects. Contact Pat at 651-766-9027 or email Karin@DaytonsBluff.org if you have projects you would like to share with others or for more information.

Block club meetings

* Wilson Avenue Block Club meets on the second Wednesday of each month at Mounds Park United Methodist Church, at Earl and Euclid, at 6:30 p.m.

* Lower Dayton’s Bluff Club Kickball meets on the second to the last Tuesday of each month at Dayton’s Bluff Rec Center at 800 Conway at 6:30 p.m. Kids and parents are welcome. Kids play, parents talk.

* Margaret Rec Center Block Club meets on the second Thursday of each month at the Margaret Rec Center, at Margaret and Frank, at 6:30 p.m.

If you wish to have your block club listed, or need information about starting your own block club, please contact Karin at 651-772-2075 or Karin@DaytonsBluff.org.

Take a Hike

Dayton’s Bluff Take a Hike occurs on the first Saturday of most months. The next hike is on Saturday, May 2. We meet at 10:30 a.m. in Indian Mounds Park at Earl St. and Mounds Blvd.

We’ll hike from Mounds Park to the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary and then walk along the Bruce Vento Recreational Trail through Swede Hollow Park to the new East Side Heritage Park. Along the way we will share stories and learn some local history of the area. The hike is about four miles long with some moderately rough terrain. Transportation will be available to return to Mounds Park, if needed.

Join us and explore some of our parks and the regional trail. For more information contact Karin at 651-772-2075 or Karin@DaytonsBluff.org.

Dayton’s Bluff Recycling

Dayton’s Bluff Recycling

The City of Saint Paul enforces the following curfew laws for youth:

- Age 15 or younger: Home by 10pm.
- Age 16-17: Home by 12 midnight.

St. Paul Police Department

Juvenile Unit

Magnet School Powwow

The American Indian Magnet School is having a Powwow on May 29th at the school at 1075 East 3rd Street. There are two grand entries, one at 1 p.m. and another at 6 p.m. There is also a feast at 5 p.m. For more information call 651-778-6406 or visit stjsjanev.net.

WaterFest 2009

Come to WaterFest on Saturday May 16, 9:30 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. at the Lake Phalen Pavilion.

WaterFest is a free family celebration of our clean lakes and an opportunity for hands-on learning about the water quality, wildlife, and special ecological features of our beautiful watershed. Highlights of WaterFest activities include: a 5k fun walk/run around Phalen Lake, Voyager canoe rides, fishing lessons, rain garden tours, and native plant give-away, live animals, water games, the Toonies Puppet Show, Hmong Youth Dancers, landscaping and watershed exhibits, the Minnesota Renewable Energy Society’s 17th Annual Solar Boat Regatta and lots more.

This event is sponsored by the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District and the cities of Maplewood and St. Paul. For more information visit www.rwmd.org.

Basketball Camp

Hone your basketball skills, make new friends and learn lessons for life at the Path To Victory Basketball Camp. The camp is for boys and girls entering grades 1-8. The girls camp will be held June 18-20 and the boys camp is June 26-28. Times for the camp are 6-8 p.m. Cost for the camp is $10. The camps are sponsored by St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church. For more information call 651-771-6406 or visit stjshnev.net.

Curlow Law

Dayton’s Bluff Recycling

Dayton’s Bluff Recycling

Promote your book "Behind The Shades." She is a frequent speaker at prisons, providing her own personal story and message of hope. To learn more about her, visit www.sheliarayecharles.com.

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Thank you to everyone who helped with the Parks and Neighborhoods Clean Up on April 11, 2009

Play Date and Times
May 1st - May 24th, 2009
Fridays - Saturdays at 7:30 p.m.
Sunday Matinees at 2:00 p.m.
Pay what you can night Monday, May 11, 2009 at 7:30 p.m.

Portage for Youth summer camps
The Portage for Youth will be holding classes in Theatre Arts and Dance this summer at the Historic Mounds Theatre, 1029 Hudson Road, Saint Paul, MN 55106. The classes are for children ages 8 to 13. Camps will be held during the weeks of July 6, July 13, July 20, August 3 and August 10. Sessions run Monday through Friday, 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Theatre Arts and Dance tap participants’ instincts to explore who they truly are and can be. Theatre, dance and movement help participants grow by encouraging creativity, cooperation with others in achieving a joint goal, self-exploration and development of moral and spiritual values. In addition, movement and dance combines athleticism, creativity and builds students’ artistic abilities.

For more information about “The Miss Firecracker Contest” or to purchase your tickets online, please go to www.startinggate.org or call 651-645-3503.

For more information about “Man with a Movie Camera” or to purchase your tickets online, please go to www.startinggate.org or call 651-645-3503.

Support your friendly neighborhood newspaper.
Advertise in the Dayton’s Bluff District Forum
Call 651-772-2075
Discovering the past using the technology of the future: eBay and East Side history

By Steve Trimble

A while back I wrote an article on what can be learned about Dayton’s Bluff history by selective buying of collectibles on eBay. Think of this as kind of a second chapter that includes additional information from Dayton’s Bluff and the Greater East Side.

The most interesting of the trio of purchased postals was an original letter sent by a Navy serviceman. It was addressed to “Mr’s Leroy Palmer, Jr. 1045 E. Maryland Avenue St Paul 6, Minn.” It was sent by her husband in Tulsa, California. I looked it up and during WWll it housed the “Naval Net Depot,” that manufactured huge metal netting. The sailors were trained in the installation and handling of the nets that were placed to stop enemy torpedoes or submarines from entering harbors up and down the Pacific coast.

Apprently they also had a “Floating Dry Dock Center,” since he tells his wife that is what the D.D.C. means on his return address. Oddly, the postmark on the envelope is June 6, 1944, but on the top of the page he has written June 8, 1944. The four-page letter starts out “Hello Sweet Heart Honey” and goes on to say that he would be shipping out perhaps to either Florida or Alabama. He explains how they “dry dock” a boat so it can be worked on.

“I am going to try to get a leave when I get to the next base. I sure hope they give it to me, don’t you,” LeRoy continues. He didn’t that the war “will last much longer now with this big drive on they sure are raising hell over there.” He was pretty sure that he would not be going overseas soon, since “we haven’t had enough training yet.”

On the fourth page he sends a message to his son, asking “how is my boy getting along,” and then asks “are you eating a lot of food so you can get big like dady.” He ends by saying “now you be a good boy & help mummy when you can. Your Dady.”

So who was this family? In the 1944 city directory, LeRoy was listed as a defense worker. His wife, whose name was Gladys, does not appear to have been married or had a daughter—the handwriting seems that Owen may have been listed in the city directory, the address is not there. It seems that Owen may have been married or had a daughter—the handwriting seems that Owen may have been married or had a daughter—then asks “how is my boy getting along,” and then asks “are you eating a lot of food so you can get big like dady.” He ends by saying “now you be a good boy & help mummy when you can. Your Dady.”

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As you can see there were two semicircular disks of ice. The front one stood 50 feet high, the one behind measured 60 feet. Electric lights illuminated these crystal palaces at night in patterns of changing color. It was said that the lighting used as much electricity during its ten-day life as a town of 7,000 consumed in a year.

In front was a skating rink around 300 feet by 100 feet and alongside were columns of ice topped with thirty-foots with flying pennants. There is some confusion as to exactly where in Dayton’s Bluff the Ice Court was located. An earlier issue of the Forum stated that it was likely in the Bluff Playground at Hudson Road between Euclid and Wilson which was destroyed when I-94 cut through the neighborhood in the early 1960s.

Finding the exact location is one of the reasons I bought the post card. It was never mailed, but on the back “Ice court just two blocks from our house 670 Short St., St. Paul Minn.” If the person writing this is correct, it may not have been as far over as Euclild and Wilson. Obviously, more research is needed once again.

In 1943 the owner of 670 Short was listed as Owen D. Wolfe. While she was not listed in the city directory, it seems that Owen may have been married or had a daughter—the handwriting on the post card looks like a woman’s and it said “our home” not “my home.” The Wolfe family may have moved away fairly soon afterwards, since in the 1940s a Dominik Anzivino was the resident of record, and seems to have been a renter. Do any of you readers know anything about these people?

My final eBay acquisition was an unusual post card of the old Mounds Park Sanitarium. The “real photo postcard,” as it is called, is eleven by 16.5 inches, is of a young man, likely dandy, andMAILING LISTING

The envelope (above) of a local sailor’s letter was postmarked on June 6, 1944 (also known as D-Day) even though the letter itself (below) was dated June 8, 1944.

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Recognizing Girl Scout Leader Emily Borth

By June Bennett

In 1932, the official mission of the Girl Scouts of America was to “help girls to realize the ideals of womanhood as a preparation for their responsibilities in the home and service to the community.”

Emily Borth

That year Emily Borth became the leader of Girl Scout troop No. 5 at Mounds Park Elementary and for the next 32 years devoted much of her life to this ideal. She and her husband Arthur had no children of their own, but Emily set out to nurture as many children as life would grant her.

Charlene Birmingham, Beverly Singewald and Ursuline Sagseth, three long-time residents of Dayton’s Bluff, were members of Emily’s troop. They remember that she had a gift for being there for the girls. She organized field trips to Taystee Bakery, Griggs Cooper Company and the fire and police departments (where the girls still remember being fingerprinted). She taught the girls how to make placemats for hospitalized patients and helped to collect dolls for less fortunate children. There were also trips to overnight cabins in Forest Lake, and Charlene’s troop was among the first riders on the exciting new Twin Cities Zephyr train in the 1930s.

Charlene was 10 years old when she entered the Girl Scouts and became part of Emily’s family. She remembers Emily’s mother and other mothers helping out with the badges and teaching the girls to make hospital-style trimmings to the children at the dances.

Emily’s husband Arthur was also part of the scouting activities; he attended Scout conferences and helped Emily take the troop to Mexico City. The women said that Arthur was considered an honorary Girl Scout and should have had a string of badges of his own.

Beverly and Ursuline were inspired by Emily’s example to become Girl Scout troop leaders as well. Beverly, Ursuline and Charlene still live in Dayton’s Bluff and remain the best of friends. Emily and Arthur retired and moved to Florida in the 1980s where Emily died at the age of 82.

She would be proud to know that the Girl Scouts still continue to this day.

Celebrating the Bluff…and its people

By Ed Lambert, Executive Director, Dayton’s Bluff Community Council

Dayton’s Bluff is one of the oldest communities in Saint Paul, and one of its most diverse. We are known for our extensive and beautiful parks, spectacular views of Downtown Saint Paul and the mighty Mississippi, as well as the scores of magnificent older homes lovingly restored, among other outstanding aspects of “the Bluff.”

Many people and organizations have striven, and continue to work hard, to make this a good place to live and do business. Even so, our community has built a rich and unique financial history, and many of us worry about the future. The District Council, among many other groups, believes it is time to come together and celebrate our community this spring, lest we forget what we have, and the bright future that can be ours, in this remarkable community.

The District Council is coordinating invitations to some 150+ people, from throughout the community, to a free Spring Celebration and Recognition Dinner at St. John’s Catholic Church of Saint Paul on Friday May 15th. It is hoped this will become an annual event, celebrating Dayton’s Bluff and recognizing the unsung activists whose efforts make this a unique and attractive community.

The dinner buffet will also serve as a forum to recognize the potential of our community’s youth, as expressed by the 2009 “Youth Voice” group of the Eastside. The ten Eastside Youth in this group have been studying ways to ask our community’s needs and assets, and learning how youth can “give voice” to their observations from college should be done about them. They will make a presentation about their experience at the dinner.

Anyone living or working in Dayton’s Bluff can inquire about invitations by calling the District Council office (651-772-2075) or emailing ed@daytonsbuff.org. Invitations are being allocated among several community groups that work closely with the council, and some are also available from the Council office.

People receiving invitations must call in and confirm their reservation for the dinner by Friday May 8, so we get a good count of likely attendance. A report on this event will appear in the July issue of the Forum. The best is yet to come…hang in there!!

Reminder: Hire licensed and bonded contractors

Ellen Balies from City Council President Kathy Lantry’s office has received word from a city staff that there have been some fliers being distributed in our neighborhoods for a tree trimming service that has ripped off a couple of people. This tree service is not licensed in St. Paul.

This is good time of year to remind everyone that if they are having work done, they should make sure that the contractor they are hiring is licensed in the City of Saint Paul and properly bonded and insured.

Garage Sale

Come and join the Woodbury Lions Club. They’re holding their garage sale at 2116 Lamplight Drive in Woodbury on Friday and Saturday, May 8 and 9 from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m.

New Sherlock Holmes novel features the East Side, Dayton’s Bluff

By Steve Trimble

Even though it was starting to snow, the streets were getting slippery, around twenty people attended a mid-March meeting of the Arts and Culture Committee of the Dayton’s Bluff Community Council at the organization’s office.

They were there to meet Jeff Falkingham, a writer whose latest book includes many passages set on the East Side. It is called Sherlock Holmes: In Search of the Source, published in 2008 and set in St. Paul in December 1896. Holmes has come to attend the wedding of a friend but there were complications—a fire and a dead body, boot prints, fuel and a missing sword are involved. He must race to solve the crime before the nuptials can proceed.

This is the second “Holmes” novel written by Falkingham, who was born in Brown’s Valley. His first grade teacher filled his head with stories about the area that he always remembered and history continued to fascinate him.

He is fairly new to the world of writing historical novels. His second grade teacher had said “You’re going to be a writer”, but I didn’t listen to her or I’d be ahead of where I am now,” Falkingham joked.

He earned a B.A. and M.A. in mass communications from Augustsburg. When he was about thirty, he started a career as a sports writer. He later worked at American Tool and Fingerhut in a variety of jobs that did not involve writing and copyediting. He currently lives in Eden Prairie.

As he got older he thought about his early experiences in Brown’s Valley and eventually “figured I’d better write some of these things down to let my kids know about where I grew up.” He remembered a lot of the stories he had been told, but needed to do research. “It made it more challenging, but also more fun,” he remembered.

“It’s like assembling a jigsaw puzzle when half of the pieces are missing. You have to use your imagination and the new pieces you create to make it fit in.” The work turned into a novel called Sherlock Holmes and the County Courthouse Capers, first published in 2001.

By Jeff Falkingham at an Arts and Culture Committee book reading.

He had now caught the “novelist bug”, but felt he had exhausted the素材 for his books. “My son was attending Metro State, he stated, “and I decided to broaden my horizons to St. Paul where there are tons of reference materials available.” By moving the story to a big city, it also allowed him to have a larger potential audience so “maybe I can end my day job,” he said, smiling.

“My goal,” Jeff said, “is to share my perspective with the East Side history with others and to interest families to remember their local history.” So why include a fictional figure as a main character?

He knew that the Brown’s Valley leaders back in the 1880s had hired a detective to sort out the County Court House situation and he thought that “for the fun of it why not have a famous detective in the book.” He was aware of Larry Millert’s novels that already had Sherlock Holmes in Minnesota and thought “if he did, why can’t I?” He carried Holmes and one of the main characters forward in time into the new work.

Without giving away the story, here’s something about the plot. Sherlock Holmes analyzed the mystery fuel that started a deadly fire and found that its use was limited to two industrial applications—one in railroading and the other in brewing.

It turned out that both Hamm’s Brewery and the old North Star Brew- ery used an experimental refrigeration to keep the beer cold. Only two people were savvy to the process. One of those lived in Rainyland and, suffering hard times, was forced to live in a shack in Swede Hollow.

So there are episodes in each of those two locations as well as Lowertown and other parts of St. Paul. In fact, most of the last two chapters are set on the East Side, including a classic chase scene in the course of our city’s great railroading heyday and in Indian Mounds Park.

Both of the books are available in libraries, local bookstores or can be ordered online at www.cccaper.com. You can also contact the author at Jeff@cccaper.com. Maybe one of our readers would be willing to write a review for a future issue.
The Denial of a Building
By Debbie Draper

To see a building standing strong, Seeing the years It stood so long, Keeping in mind the service it gave, Leaving a mark of an empty grave.

No matter what the size Not a tear is shed Or even a cry, No sadness remains, Not even a sigh, There's not even A single Good-bye.

Below: After nearly a century the 3M Co. has left the Eastside of St. Paul but a water tower and many buildings near East 7th St. remain. The debate over their fate has just begun. Photo by Steve Trimble

Letter to the Editor

Why save an old broken-down factory? The saving of 3M's factory on East 7th Street

The answers to maintaining the buildings on East Seventh Street should be viewed as three separate issues. What does this plant’s continuing presence mean to history? Is it or can it be made more esthetically pleasing? And what is the cost of maintenance and its durability? Recently a meeting was held to demonstrate plans for the existing site. The plans offered were highly expensive, demanding massive expenditures to reconstruct the site so contractors could construct little warehouses for their operations. The immense expense will take years if not centuries to recuperate. The more logical approach would be to examine all buildings for the wrecking ball to answer the question: Can the buildings be reused at a lower cost for some positive purpose?

Most buildings on site are small and of no particular historic significance and destruction is not a problem. But three buildings need an evaluation for their historic significance, Buildings 1, 2 and 20. 3M was not succeeding in business until it moved its operations to the Twin Cities numbering each building. Buildings 1 and 2 were the first structures to be 3M operating facilities. Building 1 is constructed of wood, while Building 2 was built to last using durable materials of concrete and stone. Building 20 was the company’s flagship operating factory for many years and continued being used until operations ceased. It has the further distinction of having its top floor blown away in the 1950s resulting in many deaths. The floor was replaced and used for production until the plant’s last day of operation. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and if you look at this site the water tower and Buildings 20, 21, 24 and 42 can be argued as fitting those criteria. Buildings 21 and 24 are long low buildings created with an Art Deco theme that though understated are elegant in their simplicity. Building 20 is designed in the utilitarian affect of a Mies Van Der Rohe warehouse from Germany and could either be left, highlighting the original architects design or reclad as buildings on Lafayette Avenue were, including the old Donaldson’s warehouse. Building 42 is a modern building that was well designed with a pleasant exterior that supplies an inexpensive office area. Esthetics also relates to what these buildings offer their users, as to their needs, by offering perspective from the office viewing areas. This has been sorely ignored, with the height of Buildings 20 and 24 providing excellent views of the city of St. Paul and distances beyond.

I am limited by space and time so I will briefly address the issue of maintenance and durability. 3M has been a good steward maintaining the buildings in good condition. The company was in the midst of a major improvement when their board decided to abandon the location in 2004. The one building that has the most misconceptions is Building 20. The company line is that it is ready to collapse even though they maintained production on its top floor until the factory closed. The machines shook the superstructure everyday while a stockpile of material weighing over 100 tons was stored on that floor. Furthermore massive heavy loads were also stored on all the other floors until the East Side plant was partially shut down. This building is like a castle and will be very expensive to destroy and could cost more than the Rayette building in downtown St. Paul did when it was torn down.

Historically, esthetically, and for sheer beauty those who would look for a quick return are destroying a location that needs closer inspection before charging ahead with limited positive return. This site is a jewel in the rough and offers so much more by prudently using the destruction funds to insulate and revamp the buildings for new purposes. The cost would be much less and offer more usable space, by reusing rather than destruction.

Mr. Mark D. Bradley
Maplewood

A view from the 3M Community Task Force

By Jane Prince

It wasn’t so long ago that 3M Corporation’s Dayton’s Bluff campus was producing Scotch tape and sandpaper for customers all over the world. With 3M leaving their Dayton’s Bluff campus, our neighborhood is having a voice in the future development of this roughly 45 acres of central city real estate.

As a member of the 3M Advisory Committee, as one of four representatives of the Dayton’s Bluff District 4 Community Council, I have been meeting with representatives of our surrounding neighborhoods, real estate development consultants, St. Paul Port Authority and city officials, our state legislators, Councilmember Dan Bostrom and Kathy Lantry to hammer out design principles and a shared vision for this extraordinary development opportunity.

Given 3M’s corporate innovation and international impact, the entire campus is eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Based on the success of the Dayton’s Bluff Historic District and restaurants like The Strip Club and Swedish Low Café which have made our historic neighborhood a destination, many of us on the task force believe that reusing and revitalizing 3M factory and office space will enhance our community’s sense of place. For example, there is strong support for maintaining the 3M water tower as a neighborhood symbol and landmark, not unlike the restoration of the airport beacon in Mounds Park.

At the same time, some neighbors are pushing for wholesale clearance, and point to models of light industrial development like Williams Hill and the Westgate industrial parks developed by the Port Authority. The Port Authority’s model for these parks is to clean up the brownfields, and sell developable property to job producing light industrial users for $1. Many of us are calling for a realistic cost comparison of cleaning up and giving away land, as opposed to reusing the solid old manufacturing and office facilities that served 3M so well for so long.

The committee is likely to come up with a shared vision that combines a mix of industrial and office, perhaps retail and residential development, featuring new and reused buildings, which restores some of the neighborhood street grid, provides new green space and takes advantage of the close proximity of the site to Downtown, Metropolitan State University and the Phalen Corridor.

Now for my own opinion: With Metropolitan State University just a few blocks west of the 3M site, I would like to see direct discussions about the possibility of incorporating the University’s planned expansion with the opportunities offered by the 3M Campus. The historic Building 21 and recently refurbished Building 42, at Bush and Mendota are still on the market and could potentially serve a Metro State expansion.

While 3M has ruled out staying in the neighborhood or participating in the redevelopment of its campus, the corporation’s philanthropic goals for the East Side still include education and workforce development.

And while residential development isn’t much of an option in the current economy, developing adult student housing, using private developers (who own, operate and pay taxes on these complexes) to serve Metropolitan State, might be a real possibility.

Thanks to the Port Authority’s willingness, our Advisory Committee will now meet through the end of the year to come up with a solid, realistic recommendation for the 3M Campus. Make your voices heard; the public is invited to all of our meetings.

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Dayton’s Bluff District Forum
May 2009
Our Youth. Our Community.

Highlighting the youth of Dayton's Bluff

Aaahhh, the great outdoors!

Spending Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, plus three of four Saturdays a month, doing demanding work which supports the environment doesn’t sound like your typical 15-year-old. But DaShaun Dunbar and other youth who take part in Youth Outdoors aren’t typical teenagers.

Youth Outdoors, run by the Minnesota Conservation Corps (MCC), is paid job training designed to broaden the way youth define “environmentalism” and empower young people to become active and engaged citizens. DaShaun, who lives in Dayton’s Bluff and attends Humboldt Junior High School, is participating in his second session which runs through June 6.

“I heard about the program at the Eco Fair at school,” says DaShaun. “I’ve always loved nature and wildlife and thought it would be great to do.” As part of the application process, DaShaun needed to get two letters of recommendation and explain why he was a role model for others: “My little brothers look up to me. I always try to help people out, but I make sure I look out for my brothers.”

DaShaun says the work can be physically hard and challenging, but he enjoys it. Recently the group posted duck, hatches around Crosby Lake. They have also cleaned up wood down by the river, where they repelled down the incline and were pulled up carrying the sticks. Other activities include cutting up dead trees and distributing recycling flyers. There is also a classroom environmental education component as well.

The program has benefits besides fresh air. Youth are paid a little more than $6 per hour for their 12 hours of work per week during the 12-week session, and receive a free meal per work day. There is also the opportunity to meet new people. “I’ve met new friends from Johnson and Harding [high schools],” says DaShaun.

As for the future, he wants to do something that has to do with wildlife, nature and recycling. As the earth turns “greener” there are lots of possibilities for him.

For more information on MCC and Youth Outdoors, call 651-209-9900 or visit www.conservationcorps.org, or call Dayton’s Bluff Recreation Center.

Continued from page 1

“Ordinance”

tour. Members of the group have spent the winter looking at vacant homes in the neighborhood and trying to find the best ones to show. However, this year the committee had a new issue to deal with, a strict new city ordinance designed to specifically address the purchase and rehab of a vacant property.

The ordinance, passed last fall, requires that all Category 3 vacant properties need to be rehabbed by the owner before they are sold. Additionally, the ordinance stipulates that all Category 2 vacant homes must be either rehabbed by the seller before sale or that the buyer must obtain a secured bond for the estimated costs of the repairs needed to bring the property up to code.

The intent of the ordinance was to prevent the sale of vacant properties to shady absentee landlords and quick money house flippers. These types of predatory buyer will buy low-priced properties up to code.

The second problem is the additional cost for prospective buyers of these vacant homes. Even if a buyer can get a loan for a mortgage on a Category 2 vacant home, which is a feat in and of itself, getting the extra money for the bond is extremely difficult and takes away much of the financial incentive of buying a fixer-upper.

Federal money is already in the pipeline to help address the vacant property issue all across the county. These new dollars are beginning to show up in St Paul. In April, the city announced the beginning of its “Heo- rees” program designed to give extra help to police, firefighters and veterans to purchase homes in the city.

Hopefully, more programs will follow.

The first problem is that most of these properties are owned by banks or other institutions that have little interest in fixing them up for sale. In most cases, it’s cheaper for the banks to pay the $6,000 to $14,000 dollars the city charges to tear down Category 3 vacant houses than to hire contractors to bring these homes up to code for sale.

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“Ordinance”

Metropolitan State University’s
new art exhibit - Saib Kuv

Metropolitan State University Third Floor Gallery is pleased to present Saib Kuv (Watch me-See the Hmong in me). The exhibit on April 16 and continues through July 24. Gallery hours are Monday-Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.; and Fridays and Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. During the summer months, the gallery is closed on Fridays.

The show was organized by the local nonprofit, In Progress, which provides high-quality, affordable education programs for adults seeking their insights within the art- work presented in this exhibit.”

As part of the Saib Kuv exhibit, a series of community dialogues about what it means to be Hmong within a Minnesota landscape will take place. These events are scheduled from 1-3 p.m. in a room in the library on the following Saturdays: May 9, June 6 and 20. They are free and open to the public.

For more information, contact Erica Rasmussen, gallery director, at erica.rasmussen@metrostate.edu. or call her at 651-999-5942.

Metropolitan State University, a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, provides high-quality, affordable education programs for adults seeking baccalaureate, master’s and doctoral degrees.

Dayton’s Bluff District Forum
Setting the stage for children’s art activities

Part II in a series about children’s art

By Mary Ann Cogelow

Once you understand that children are drawing upon a deep human wellspring as they create art, there are many things you as a parent or other caregiver can do to support their creativity. Basically, adults support children’s art by providing repeated opportunities for them to use different art materials, and by expressing their interest in and appreciation of the child’s process.

Let’s start with opportunities. It’s wise to talk about your own needs and limitations. Art is so important in the lives of children that, if you need to, stretching your own tolerance for mess and accidents and inconvenience is worthwhile. What will help you be available and engaged as children explore paint, crayons, markers, glue, scissors, and modeling materials like play dough? None of us has unlimited energy or patience. Plan for conditions that will help you be in the best frame of mind to enjoy being present with kids as they create. Making art with an adult who is cranky or too controlling is no fun, and does not provide the best support for the child’s creativity.

How much time are you able to spend setting up, supervising, and reminding children that there are limits about use of art materials? The attention spans of preschool children are measured in minutes. If setting up and cleaning up takes much more time than the child actually spends doing an activity, you may find yourself thinking, “This is more effort than it’s worth.” Figuring out how to have materials readily available to pull out quickly may help you remain supportive.

Choose a location where clean up will be relatively easy. Many art activities involve a fair amount of mess. In fact the messiness is an essential part of the exploration for the child. In many homes the kitchen lends itself to easier clean up of spilled paint, trodden upon play dough, or scribbles that accidentally go off the paper than other rooms. It’s easier to be a happy assistant if you aren’t worrying about getting clay out of the carpet or paint out of the curtains. During the summer you can take many art activities outside. When my children were small, the only place I could possibly set up an easel was against the doorjamb in my bedroom and courtyard. A bucket of water (remember, water in large containers always calls for supervision) for washing up and laundry lines for hanging wet paintings to dry, it was a great place to enjoy making art.

Choose to set up art activities when you have enough time and energy to be fully present physically and psychologically. Engage with the child to the degree that is enjoyable and useful to both of you. Don’t hover or boss. Be aware enough to catch the tipped paint pot before all the paint has drained out, or to remind the child that “scissors are for cutting the paper, not for cutting the paper towards the kitchen curtains.

This brings us to limits. Think through reasonable limits before beginning an activity. This is another area where you may need to stretch yourself. What seems reasonable to an adult may not be most reasonable to a child’s exploration. I remember two little girls in my class who had a marvelous time painting each other’s faces and arms with tempera paint. Because they had mutually agreed to this activity, were careful in their application of paint to one another, and because they were having such fun, I let them finish their “art project.” When the mother of one of them arrived, she was met with two smiling, brilliantly decorated faces. Her shriek of dismay and the following scolding clearly told the girls that she did not value their creativity.

Some basic limits around art activities sound might be the following limits to these.

Some basic limits around art activities sound might be the following limits to these.

“You need to wear an apron while you finger-paint.”

“Play the play dough stays on the table.”

“Keep the paint on the paper.”

You need to write on paper with the pen, not on your baby sister’s head.”

As with all limits for young children, you will need to repeat them many times. And you will, of course, modify them as children grow and learn.

Be accepting and forgiving. Accidents do happen. Sometimes the scribble goes off the paper because the child’s muscle control is still developing. The child forgets that she is carrying a dripping paintbrush as she runs to see who rang the front door bell. Deliberately testing the limits is another way to explore and figure out the world. I remember the day my daughter Maren, around 3-1/2, leaned against the doormanjm in my bedroom and gave me a mischievous smile. I asked, “Why are you smiling at me with that peculiar grin?” “Because I’m writing on the wall with the hand you can’t see.” She wasn’t creating an artistic masterpiece; she was just testing her growing knowledge of her limitations, as well as exploring what would happen if she deliberately broke a rule. Because I wanted her to have access to art materials, and because I could understand her limit testing as a part of normal healthy development, my discipline was matter of fact and boring. I took the crayon away temporarily and reminded her that crayons were to use on paper, not on walls. Life went on.

Every child needs to have some art materials available to use at home. But if, as a parent, your time and energy don’t allow for lots of art activities at home there are many out of places offering art to children. When my kids were little and I was working full time, they got much of their exposure to art during the school year at the Dayton’s Bluff Early Childhood Family Education Program. Preschools, childcare settings, and other community activities offer a variety of art experiences for children of all ages. Sometimes grandmas and grandpas, aunts, uncles, neighbors and friends have the time and energy to engage in these kinds of activities with children.

Next Month: Talking with children about their art in ways that really encourage them.