

# Preservation Alliance NEWS

## WHAT IS PRESERVATION ALLIANCE?

Preservation alliance of Owensboro - Daviess County is a nonprofit organization established in 1982 for the purpose of promoting an awareness within the community and county for the need to preserve buildings and sites of architectural and/or historical significance and to develop a means of effective action to encourage owners to rehabilitate buildings in a manner which will maintain the structures' architectural and historical integrity and to prevent demolition of such buildings wherever possible.

## WHAT IS PRESERVATION ALLIANCE DOING?

A current awareness project is the development of a slide show highlighting Owensboro's lost architectural treasures and emphasizing existing buildings that should be earmarked for preservation. This will be available for civic groups or clubs.

Foremost on our preservation action agenda is stopping the possible demolition of St. Joseph's Church. Our efforts are focused on developing alternative uses which will be compatible with its history.

## WHY IS PRESERVATION ALLIANCE'S PROJECT TO SAVE ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH IMPORTANT?

The preservation and adaptive re-use of St. Joseph's Catholic Church has been a goal of the Preservation Alliance since the group's inception in 1982.

St. Joseph's was established in 1870 when the German-speaking element of the congregation at St. Stephen's Church left to form their own congregation. Money for the construction of the present building was raised entirely by the congregation and the structure was blessed in 1880. The building, which has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places, represents an important part of the history of the large German Catholic community and in a larger sense the history of Owensboro as a whole. It is particularly noteworthy for its sixteen stained glass windows which were imported from Munich, Germany and rival those of cathedrals in Europe. They are irreplaceable.

St. Joseph's was closed in the winter of 1979 as a move to conserve energy. The congregation was merged with that of St. Paul's Church, one block east on 4th Street. The church was re-opened in 1981 for a special service in German when a group of Germans with the Friendship Force visited the city. A great deal of publicity surrounded this event which proved to be the impetus for a concerted effort to save St. Joseph's Church. Last Christmas Eve, a fire did considerable damage to St. Paul's and services were temporarily moved to St. Joseph's.

The threat of demolition hangs heavy over St. Joseph's unless some compromise can be reached with the diocese on alternative use of the structure. The Preservation Alliance feels that it should be preserved, in some suitable capacity to all concerned, as an important link in Owensboro's history. Our city has too many historic parking lots already.

If demolition can't be prevented, the St. Joseph's Committee of the Preservation Alliance hopes to obtain a two-year "stay of execution" in which to do a documentary about the history and architecture of the church, efforts to save it, and why they were unsuccessful. In this way we will have at least documented for posterity some of the beauty of this historic building, perhaps create a desire for future preservation, and an awareness that our historic buildings stand as links between our future and our past and give us a sense of place and time and who we are in an increasingly complex world. This is our over-riding goal as an organization.

## ABOUT THE LEVEGA CLEMENTS HOUSE:

The Clements House is the finest example of Queen Anne domestic architecture in Owensboro. The house, called Highlands by its builder, is appropriately named because of its commanding position on a hill overlooking the Ohio River. The house and yard cover an entire block. Much of the original view of the river has been cut off by modern housing and industrial development. The Monarch family came from France and settled first in Maryland before coming to Owensboro in the 1830's. The Monarch Brothers all followed in the footsteps of their ancestors and became distillers. Little community progress was made that was not affected by one of them. In the height of their financial success the brothers all built grand homes, several of them on Distiller's Row (East 4th St. between Wing and Highland.) The finest was Richard Monarch's home which was razed for the construction of Daviss Co. Middle School. The Martin V. Monarch's home is best known because it was used later by an order of nuns. It was razed in 1970. The Monarch-Payne and Le Vega Clements Houses still remain. The Le Vega Clements house was built by Sylvester Monarch, who owned Eagle Distillery and a large stock-yard. After prohibition the house was sold to Le Vega Clements, attorney and founder of the Kentucky Buggy Co. and mayor of Owensboro. His family lived in it until the last heir died in 1984.

Thanks to those who have contributed time, talents, equipment, libations and house extraordinaire:

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