

PLATT PARK *Post*

The Official Newsletter of
Platt Park People's Association
Feb / March 2018
www.3pa.org

ADVENTURES IN HISTORIC HOMES:

The Old Byers House

by Lucy Graca

When in 2003 the third floor of the old Byers House on the corner of E. Colorado Avenue and S. Sherman Street went up in flames, the long-time owner, Lyle Renken, rebuilt it and repaired the damage to the rest of the house over the next few years. Meanwhile, Nikki Widner and her husband Tom Veitch were looking for something larger than their bungalow on S. Emerson Street for their growing family. Nikki, who says "I love surfing the MLS," saw the Byers house for sale and went to take a look out of curiosity.

"We saw the staircase," says Nikki, "and we thought 'Uh-oh, we're going to have to buy this house!'" The sweeping, five-foot wide stairs curve gracefully to the second floor, with massive paneled oak newel posts and a beautifully turned balustrade glowing softly in the light from two high windows. Their decision was helped by a master-suite that covers the entire second floor, and their two boys fell on their knees and begged when they saw the third-floor open plan suite that



would be theirs. So they bought it in 2012, "and we've been doing work on it ever since."

Denver architect William Lang, who also designed Molly Brown's house, designed the Queen Anne style house in 1891 for Frank Byers, the son of *Rocky Mountain News* founder William N. Byers. A Herndon Davis watercolor of it is in Denver Public Library's Western History Collection. In the painting, the house is white, though now it is brick red with details picked out in green, purple, and orange. Nikki says they're trying to

Continued on page 3



The Platt Park People's Association, a city of Denver Registered Neighborhood Organization, serves more than 3,000 homes and businesses in the neighborhood bounded by Broadway on the West, Downing on the East, I-25 on the North and Evans on the South. 3PA membership is open to all neighbors and business owners who live and own property within these boundaries. Have a voice in your neighborhood and with the city: Join 3PA.

Check out our website. Stay informed, learn about upcoming events, and more!
www.3pa.org.

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Call for Contributions!

We are looking for a stellar advertising manager. Please contact Penni Dorwart at 303-715-0024, pdorwart@yahoo.com

The Platt Park Post is always looking for new articles and neighborhood updates. If you are a Platt Park resident interested in writing an article, please email James Lindberg: lindberg20@gmail.com

Neighborhood Notes: An Opinion

Is it just me or is it getting a wee bit crowded around here? From my house we now can see the condos that replaced the Broadway Motel rising up to fill a swath of the western sky. On the north we have those rather significant monoliths of the Henry and Hanover Broadway-Station and now even on the quiet corner of Asbury and Downing we have the Marion Place condos. Platt Park is becoming a bit of a walled city, it seems. All the more reason I love strolling through the park on my way to a more neighborhood-scaled place on Old South Pearl or Broadway—reminds me we are still a great little community that, for better or worse, finds itself in the middle of an ever growing city.

All that seems a good excuse to go get a beer, and to help with that we have yet another wonderful addition to the microbrewery community, **Alternations Brewing** located at 1539 S Broadway. Alternations, the brainchild of owners Brendan and Jenn Pleskow, opened their doors in December of 2017. There seems no risk of beer saturation around here as when I dropped by one afternoon at opening time I watched the place rapidly fill up. There was a collection of first timers and regulars (already?) from the hood who quickly took a seat at the bar and began expounding to me the virtues of the new establishment. Seems the Pleskow’s have already hit on a winning formula.

The idea of Alternations was to craft small batches of ever-changing beers that run from pilsners to oak-aged imperial stouts and about everything in-between. Brendan—who runs the brewing operation—currently has about a hundred beer-recipes, which he will be slowly brewing his way through over time. As Brendan said, drinking the same beer all the time is boring so he plans to keep an always-rotating tap of about eight to ten beers. He admitted that over time a few crowd favorites could become fixtures on the tap but for now it’s a constant rotating smorgasbord of beer heaven.

Alternation Brewing is still in a soft opening phase. They are currently open Thursday through Sunday. Hours are 4 to 10 pm Thursday and Friday, opening at noon on Saturday and Sundays. A food truck is available most every Thursday and Friday evening and on Saturdays they are planning to showcase live music. The Grand Opening, scheduled for late March, will highlight expanded hours and an outdoor patio in the back to soak up the sun along with your suds. Brandon loves to visit with neighbors and is typically around so drop on by and say hi.

One of the few downsides of living in a big city are the pesky crimes that can go along with it. This means petty crime (porch pirates) and occasionally the even more serious thievery. Luckily, both violent crime and property thefts in Platt Park *declined* by 24% between 2016 and 2017, according to statistics published by the Denver Police

Department. However, it is still important to work to reduce crime. By collaborating with our local police department, we can take steps to mitigate the occurrence of theft. One of the efforts under way is the recent initiation of the **Platt Park Neighborhood Watch** program, which kicked off in October of 2017. In the words of local resident Liz Smith, who is helping head up this volunteer effort:

“The Platt Park Neighborhood Watch program is intended to be a proactive resource which empowers our neighbors to watch out for each other and helps facilitate a greater sense of community in our neighborhood. We want this program to be a dynamic forum with open communication between all participants: neighbors, Block Communicators and the offices of the Denver Police Department.”

The system functions by having a volunteer Block Communicator (BC) who organizes each individual block and sets up a system of communication between the neighbors of that block. This enables neighbors to have quick access to communication networks that facilitate safety. It can also be used as a reminder for street sweeping dates and snow shoveling laws, notification for lost/found animals or animals at large, requests for package pickups, vacation notifications, etc. The BC will organize periodic meetings to keep everyone informed, share information and pass along helpful tips. A representative from the police department can also be requested to attend these meeting.

With a 50% participation within a block, a Neighborhood Watch sign will be posted at the end of each block. Neighborhood Watch has been a proven deterrent to crime when successfully organized.

If you are interested in learning more about the Platt Park Neighborhood Watch, send an inquiry to: PlattParkNW@gmail.com.

You heard it here first! Platt Park’s own **City Councilman Jolon Clark** will soon be presiding over the City Counsel as President for a two-year term. We’ll have to check but I think he gets a big gavel for that role. Way to go Jolon!

Lastly in the “Nothing Gets by This Crack Investigative Reporter” department **Yardbird Restaurant** located at 1529 S Pearl St shortened its name simply to **Bird** last month. No idea why—but cool just the same.

Okay, you can now consider yourself up-to-date on all the happenings around here. Hope you enjoy the last bit of winter and take heart; spring is just around the corner.

See you around the neighborhood.



Tom Snyder

Historic Homes

Continued from page 1

decide on a new set of colors for a much-needed new paint job this summer.

Though the house was livable when the family moved in, Nikki and Tom repainted the entire interior, updated the master and third floor baths, built a garage and a fence and re-landscaped. But, Nikki says, “The kitchen was really, really dysfunctional”—dark, L-shaped, and with virtually no cabinets. Acting as her own contractor between jobs as a publishers’ marketer, Nikki has recently remodeled it into a light-filled modern kitchen, while keeping period design elements, such as paneled cabinets and a soap-stone counter, railroaded tiles, simple fittings, and an oak floor. Next, she plans to update the first-floor bathroom — if she can decide what to do with its 1970s-era black claw-foot tub.

One big surprise came when the kitchen sewer pipe had to be replaced. In the process of excavating back from the kitchen to the alley, workers encountered a brick tunnel going — who knows where? Nikki speculates it might have served the former carriage house, or perhaps had some purpose related to Prohibition.

Nikki and Tom plan to apply for a historic landmark designation for the house. “I don’t want this house to ever be torn down,” says Nikki, “ever, ever, ever.”

*If anyone in Platt Park has an interesting story about the history of his or her home, please email Lucy Graca: lucy.y.graca@comcast.net

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ARTIST PROFILE:

Bob Hamilton-Pennell

by Mariah Raymond

Most backpackers who venture into the wilderness pare down their belongings to only the essentials: shelter, food, water, enough clothing to stay warm and dry and maybe a paperback for entertainment. Platt Park artist Bob Hamilton-Pennell carries not only the above items on his back when he heads into the desert of Utah or the mountains of Colorado, but the materials required for painting as well. He is passionate about the outdoors and his paintings are a direct product of his experiences on these excursions. “My love of nature keeps me going,” he says, “that’s what fuels my art.”

Bob paints in two distinct styles, one using watercolors, and one using acrylics. He creates the watercolors ‘en plein air,’ or out in nature, and composes the acrylics in his garage studio. In finished form the two techniques appear vastly different, yet closer study reveals subtle connections. His watercolors are representational and skillfully executed, and yet possess the looseness that comes only with competence. Anyone who has dabbled in different painting media knows the challenges unique to watercolor--the difficulty, if not impossibility, of correcting mistakes, the need to understand how water affects different types of watercolor paper, the familiarity with each paintbrush required to deliver the desired stroke. He has mastered his craft.

Bob’s acrylic paintings are explosive expansions on his watercolors. He references not only the colors and tones used, but the “excitement and energy” he felt when creating that first watercolor sketch. The acrylics are large in scale, abstract—often including organic, geometric forms—and the colors of nature are amplified into vivid reds, yellows and blues twisted into bursts of light, color and motion. In these he brings a more spiritual element into his work.

While many artists claim they started making art when they could first hold a pencil, Bob came to painting later in life. He grew up in Portland, Oregon, and after graduating high school, enrolled in the architecture program at Washington State University in Pullman. There he took a watercolor class that changed his life. From that moment forward, Bob continued painting, no matter his location or employment. After earning a degree in architecture, he felt a strong pull to work with kids, and, heeding the call, be-

Continued on next page.



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gan a thirty-year career in public education. From teaching special needs at a high school in St. Louis, he moved down through the grades to kindergarten. He spent his last seven years of his career in public education, from 2002 to 2009, teaching art in Aurora to grades K through five.

Bob moved to Denver’s Baker neighborhood in 1981, then to Platt Park in 1990. He and his wife raised two sons in their bungalow, which previously housed Gates Rubber Plant employees. Their house was so small that his “studio” was underneath their murphy bed and he could only work when the bed was folded up. They have since renovated and Bob can now stretch out in his garage studio. Like many longtime residents, he laments the traffic and the density that has come to the neighborhood, but he enjoys the many perks it has to offer, such as engaging neighbors, the Old South Pearl Street Farmer’s Market, Platt Park and Decker Library.

Forever a teacher, Bob has led classes in watercolor for the past six years through University of Denver’s enrichment program. The students in his current class range from beginner to advanced. Anyone interested in starting out or brushing up on their watercolor skills can sign up through DU.

To contact Bob Hamilton-Pennell, or see more of his work, visit hp-watermedia.com.





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OPINION:

Construction Should Not Mean Closed Sidewalks

by James Lindberg

Denver’s many new construction projects have made walking in the city more difficult. Signs reading ‘Sidewalk Closed’ greet pedestrians along many of Denver’s streets. A recent *StreetsBlog* article detailed an intersection in Downtown in which all eight sidewalks were closed due to construction, leaving pedestrians no choice but to walk in the street. In Platt Park, construction at the corner of Broadway and Iowa has shutdown an entire corner of pedestrian right-of-way. A section of sidewalk is also closed along the 1400 block of S. Pearl St., at the center of our neighborhood’s celebrated pedestrian commercial corridor.

According to Article X of Denver’s Municipal Code, “A walkway not less than four (4) feet wide, with a railing on the street side shall be maintained on the sidewalk in front of the building site during construction or demolition work.” However, builders can obtain a permit that allows them to circumvent this requirement and close sidewalks without providing temporary walkways.

Given the number of closed sidewalks adjacent to construction sites, it is clear that the city needs to re-think the way it regulates this issue. Article X should be more strictly enforced. Builders must be required to provide safe and handicap-accessible temporary walkways whenever permanent sidewalks are closed, even if this means remov-

ing a lane of parking. A covered walkway must be built when construction involves scaffolding. Providing signage for lengthy detours is not adequate.

Denver can look to other U.S. cities such as Portland, Philadelphia and New York, all of which have adopted guidelines that require the provision of temporary sidewalks adjacent to construction sites.

Denver has recently adopted the Vision Zero Action Plan, which details a strategy to reduce all traffic-related deaths to zero by the year 2030. In 2017, 51 people died on Denver’s streets while walking, bicycling, taking public transit, riding a motorcycle, or driving a car. The Action Plan calls for improvements to sidewalks, including the commitment to build fourteen miles of new sidewalk between 2018 and 2019. These are important steps. Yet in order to realize the goal of zero deaths, the city must insure that the good intentions of Vision Zero are integrated into the smaller details of the Municipal Code.

Vision Zero also calls for the creation of a ‘Culture of Safety.’ A ‘Sidewalk Closed’ sign is reminiscent of a time when historic city centers were torn down to make room for new highways. Denver will achieve a twenty-first century ‘Culture of Safety’ only when residents, city leaders and builders all see the closure of a sidewalks as unacceptable.

SCHOOL UPDATE:

McKinley Thatcher Elementary

by Ingrid Hoff

McKinley-Thatcher Elementary is your green-rated neighborhood school! A small school with 175 students in ECE to fifth grade, McKinley-Thatcher is proud to be a part of the vibrant Platt Park community. The school is opening its doors from February 1 to February 28 for the annual SchoolChoice enrollment season. If you’re looking for academic excellence, your search is over: neighborhood families are invited to attend a school tour, where they will meet the school leadership, visit classrooms, and participate in a Q&A session with the principal.

McKinley-Thatcher offers an early childhood program for three and four year-old students and small class sizes in kindergarten through 5th grade. The school is in the midst of a multi-year expansion to add a second classroom to each grade level, and will begin construction in late 2018 on a new addition to the building. Connected to this growth, the school is also in the midst of their Roadmap to the Future visioning project, and are excited about the feedback they are hearing from current and prospective parents about an enhanced focus on experiential learning and deeper personalization of student learning.

For more information on enrolling at McKinley-Thatcher for the 2018-19 school year, please call (720) 424-5600 or visit mckinleythatcher.dpsk12.org. Community members are invited to attend the school’s first ever cultural festival on March 9!

SCHOOL UPDATE:

South High School

Schools of Opportunity Award: South High School is proud to announce that it has been awarded a GOLD Recognition by the Schools of Opportunity high school recognition program. This award is through the University of Colorado – Boulder. Formal recognition was also publicized in the Washington Post. South received this prestigious award due to many aspects of its curriculum and school culture, including the increasing support for teachers, using multiple measures to assess student learning, strengthening support for students with special needs, designing a culturally diverse curriculum, and sustaining meaningful engagement with parents and local communities.

Summer Sports Program at South: We are excited to offer another FUN filled week of multi-sport participation July 16th-20th 2018! We will return home to our beautiful campus and facilities at Denver South High School - Home of the REBELS! Our Coaches and Counselors look forward to the return of all of our 2-4-1 Denver South families to reconnect and PLAY together! Please access our new website and registration pages below and follow our social media pages for updates and reminders of all the FUN we’ve had the last couple years! All campers participate in 3 sports each day – choose from our 8 fun-filled options: Basketball, Flag Football, Lacrosse, Soccer, Tennis, Volleyball, Universal Sports, Groove and Move and for the first time at Denver. The camp is for boys and girls grades 3 through 9 from 9:00-3:30 pm. Before and after care is provided.

Neighbors can learn more about our great local high school through Facebook, Instagram, and the Denver South High School website: www.denversought.org.



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Platt Park Events Calendar

DECKER LIBRARY EVENTS

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Follow Decker Branch Library on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/decker.dpl>

Library Hours: Monday, Tuesday 12-8 p.m.; Wednesday, Thursday, Friday

10 a.m. -6 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Sunday Closed

Toddler Storytime, Wednesdays, 10:15 a.m.

Stories, songs, rhymes and fun for toddlers ages 18-36 months and their parents or caregivers.

All Ages Storytime, Thursdays, 10:15 a.m.

Stories, songs, rhymes and fun for children of all ages and their parents or caregivers. Craft activity immediately follows the program.

Baby Storytime, Wed. and Thurs., 11:15 a.m.

Stories, songs, rhymes and fun for babies ages 0-18 months and their parents or caregivers. Play and social time immediately follow the program.

Cookie Decorating and Holiday Card Making

Saturday, December 2, 2 p.m.

Enjoy the South Pearl Street Holiday Market, then stop by Decker for cookie decorating and holiday card making. Ideal for ages 3-8 with an adult helper.

Chamber Music Concert

Saturday, February 17, 2 p.m.

Get swept away by a wide range of classical works performed by amateur musicians from the Colorado Chamber Music Society.

Trivia Night at Declaration Brewing

Monday, February 26, 6-8 p.m.

Players are invited to come test their literary and general knowledge and drink a great brew. Questions will be selected from books that will be available for checkout the night of the event. Ages 21+

Chamber Music Concert

Saturday, March 17, 2-3 p.m.

Get swept away by a wide range of classical works performed by amateur musicians from the Colorado Chamber Music Society.

Crazy Hats Craft for Children

Tuesday, March 27, 3:30 p.m.

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Quote of the Issue

*"A developed country is not a place where the poor have cars...
it is where the rich use public transportation."*

- Enrique Peñalosa, Mayor of Bogotá, Colombia