



ALTON AREA LANDMARKS ASSOCIATION
BOX 232, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002
WWW.ALTONLANDMARKS.ORG

April 2021

Historical Commission: The Alton Historical Commission is soliciting nominations for its annual awards honoring historic preservation efforts by homeowners and business owners. Nominations are due to the commission by June 15. Awards winners will be chosen this fall. For more information click here:

<https://www.thetelegraph.com/news/article/Alton-Historic-Commission-accepting-award-16072859.php>

Tunnel: A tunnel was discovered going under a house in the Middletown Historic District. Located on Langdon Street between 3rd and 4th Streets, the tunnel goes from the street to under the house, but does not connect to the house. It is not known what the tunnel was used for.

Hello: We spoke to Charlotte Stetson recently. She is a local historian and author of two picture books about Alton. She is well and healthy. It was good to hear from you Charlotte. Have a great summer.

Feedback: We need some feedback from you. We have two upcoming projects and we would appreciate some suggestions from you. First, we are thinking about

renovating our website. Please take a look at our present website and give us some ideas about changing and improving it. Second, we think that again this year instead of the traditional House Tour, we will have another drive-by House Tour. Last year we did the Sears Kit House drive-by House Tour. Do you have an idea for a new theme for this year's House Tour? Send us your idea.

Lecture: On December 5th Michael Allen gave his lecture on modern American Architecture, ending last winter's lecture series. If you missed it, you can see it by clicking here-
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16JxXelpT8DIqJFM7NwLS6cPrUOBjlufu?usp=sharing>

Pay Pal: We now have PayPal on our website. If you wish to pay your dues or make a donation to the AALA, you can do it with a credit card through Pay Pal rather than mailing a check. Click on "Donations" on www.altonlandmarks.org and follow the instructions. Thank you.

House Tour: We have released our AALA Kit House Tour free to the public. This is our 48th annual house tour. It is on our website, www.altonlandmarks.org. A paper version of the tour guide is available at the downtown Visitor's Center's outside box. We have Pay Pal on our website now if you wish to make a donation to the AALA.

Donations: Donations can be mailed to the AALA, Box 232, Alton, IL 62002. Individual dues are \$15.00 a year. Family membership is \$25.00 a year. Contributions are tax deductible. Help us be a strong voice in preserving historic Alton. Thank you for your support. And remember to contribute to the other local

organizations that enrich your life.

Help: William Street is the first street someone can enter Alton from the Great River Road. It is in horrible condition. It needs to be repaired and smoothed out. City workers were recently inspecting it. They reported that there are plans for restoring the brick street. That would be great news for those who live in the Christian Hill Historic District.

WINDOWS: Nothing changes the character of historic homes like replacement windows. Please consider repairing your original windows before you forever change the visual appeal of your historic home.

Meetings: Since selling the Hart House, we have had fewer general membership meetings. However, I invite anyone who wishes to attend our monthly board meetings to contact me (Terry Sharp 463-5761 or reply to this email). The nine AALA board members meet monthly on a telephone conference call. At these one hour meetings we conduct the business of the organization. If you have something you would like to bring to

the attention of the organization, call me so that you can speak to the board. We have open meetings and appreciate your interest and feedback.

KOENIG HOUSE- The Koenig House (829 East Fourth St.) is in need of immediate repairs. We hope the Alton Museum, which owns it, can attend to it before it gets any worse. The Museum is facing fines for code ordinance violations. The Wilhelm House (314 Oak), also owned by the Museum, has been condemned by the city. The Museum board has a responsibility to maintain their buildings.

Demo: A small saltbox house at the corner of State Street and Beacon Street was demolished by the city. The 100 year old plus house was owned by a downtown tavern owner. The house was vacant for years and was never maintained. Neglect by the owner erases another historic house from Alton. The AALA tried to find a buyer for it, but the owner could never decide on a price. So now we have a blank space on the historic State Street hill.

Two or three more houses on State Street look to be demolished soon.

Sidewalks: Run out of jobs around the house to do? Consider adopting a brick sidewalk to clean off. Our brick streets and sidewalks give Alton its character. Too many of our brick sidewalks are covered with grass. If they are cleaned off, people will use them and they will remain clean. Any bushes and shrubs should be cleared off sidewalks for safety. Lots of people are walking for exercise and fun. They deserve clean sidewalks.

Grand: All construction work has stopped on the Simmons downtown redevelopment project because of the pandemic. However before it was stopped, the AALA found out that all of the original windows of the Grand Theater were removed and discarded. The AALA contacted Mr. Simmons about our disappointment that the original windows were not repaired and reused. Altonworks, Mr. Simmon's company, assured us the new Grand windows will be identical to the originals.

Although we still feel this affects the authenticity of the restoration, this has opened up a direct line of communication between the AALA and Altonworks. The Grand Theater is the first and perhaps the most anticipated of the Altonworks projects. The AALA will continue to keep a watchful eye on the whole redevelopment program so that Altonworks abides by historic preservation standards.

Facebook: The AALA has a Facebook site now. Check it out and give us suggestions. <https://www.facebook.com/Alton-Area-Landmarks-Association-307793659892024/>

REVITALIZED: Local attorney John Simmons and his wife Jayne have announced their plans to invest \$75 million to the revitalization to downtown Alton. Mr. Simmons has been for the last year and a half acquiring buildings in Alton. His plan divides the downtown into three districts: the Grand Entertainment District, the Broadway Makers District and the Jacoby Arts District. This could be an exciting rebirth for our area.

Recently it was announced that a new city park will be created at Ridge and Broadway Streets. The land is owned by Mr. Simmons and is used as a parking lot for the Jacoby Arts Center.

Accepted: The Abbott Machine Company building, formerly the Alton Gas & Electric Power House on the Great River Road, has been accepted to be on the National Register of Historic Places. The building, at 700 West Broadway, was built in 1913. Other than the Union Brewery at 1421 Pearl Street, this is Alton's first industrial building to be on the Register. The AALA is trying to offer a tour of the building in the near future.

Gift: The Tinner's Anvil at 211 Langdon is selling pieces of terra cotta for the AALA. They are perfect for backyard gardens. The AALA gets a commission for each piece sold.

Did you know?: A towboat with the maximum length of barges (five) is longer than the Titanic. 1000 feet plus vs. 889 feet.

Podcast: Shannon Briggs and Stephanie Young have begun producing podcasts (audio only programs) about Alton history. Here's how they describe them:

All Town, USA is a podcast that explores Alton, Illinois' significant history and evolving identity. We tell stories in search of ways to bridge divides across neighborhoods. "This is about all of us. We are all town."

Episodes are available directly on our website, iTunes, Apple Podcasts, and Overcast.

www.alltownusa.org

Ep 1: Alton's location led to booming industries, war operations, and the Underground Railroad

Ep 2: The effects of Elijah Lovejoy's life and death on the Civil War, Abolitionism, and Freedom of the Press

Ep 3: Escaped and freed slaves founded communities along the Mississippi River. Rocky Fork, 1863.

Ep 4: Alton's historical landmarks and the process to receive recognition locally and nationally.

Future episodes explore the diverse history and individuals behind Alton's businesses and schools.

Hayner Library: The AALA has bought three file cabinets for the growing Alton House History Repository. Stored at the Genealogy and Local History Library at 401 State Street, the Repository was begun with 300 house histories written for past AALA Historic House Tours. Now the total is over 3000 histories. Every year as new histories are written for the House Tour and as the library staff add more information to existing histories, storage has become a problem. Hopefully, these cabinets will ease that problem.

Haskell House: Here's a new development which may help save the Haskell House in Haskell Park. The city owned house needs a use to be saved. Britta Haggard and Sue Utgaard have proposed using the house as a children's museum. Britt and Sue have been meeting with local groups, neighbors, and city officials to build support. If these two ladies can get this project going, this could be a win-win situation for the city of Alton, the Haskell House and our area's children.

The other important news about the Haskell House is the discovery of its architect. While sorting through blueprints in its attic, it was found that the house was designed by renowned German born American architect Theodore C. Link. Link was the architect of the Hayner Library at 401 State, the First Presbyterian Church at West Fourth and Alby Streets and the St. Louis Union Station.