



The Voice

NEWS FROM VICTORIAN VILLAGE INC., CDC 501(C)(3)

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Friends of Victorian Village

VVI is made strong by our members. 165 fans of this historic neighborhood joined us in 2009, our first year for the membership program. **We have already added 22 new members in 2010.**

Please consider becoming a member of Victorian Village Inc. or renewing for 2010. Since 2006 we have worked to establish this neighborhood as a desirable place to live, work and visit. So many of you appreciate and understand the importance of our historic churches, parks and homes. Your financial support is a vote to preserve these structures and promote the area to heritage tourists and potential residents. **Donors giving \$100 or more will receive a unique note card suite: Victorian Memphis.** This set of eight note cards feature the **black and white photography of Monty Shane**, now part of the Victorian Village Inc. staff.



medallion from the Lee House

With your help, VVI will continue to be a strong advocate in our local government. Our goal is 150 new members this year.

Current friends are asked to “bring a friend” and help make a real change in downtown Memphis.

Go online to

www.victorianvillageinc.org

and join or renew using our Google Checkout. Or print our membership form and mail your donation to our office.

Thank you for your support!

Project Updates from the Executive Director

It has been a whirlwind quarter here in the Village, starting with a very productive meeting at the **Mallory-Neely House** with **Mayor Wharton** and **Park Services Director Cindy Buchanan**. We were joined by our friends **Meri Armour of Le Bonheur** and **Gene Cashman from The Urban Child Institute**. Director Buchanan confirmed that the Mallory-Neely House and the Magevney House Museums are to be opened this year and operated by the **Memphis Museum Systems**. As of this newsletter's publication, the Pink Palace has selected the three finalists for the historic properties manager position, and the final paperwork is now at the city's personnel department for vetting. There is also a great deal of restoration work to be done to the house over the next few months before it can be re-opened to the public. An actual opening date has yet to be determined. **Congressman Steve Cohen** has made a special request for additional federal funding to help with the restoration costs. \$145,000 would help match the City's costs and will be allocated if approved by



the Congressional Committee. Pending City Council approval, approximately \$145,000 would cover annual operational expenses, plus income from the museum's admission fees. **If you have the opportunity, please let the Pink Palace know of your support for this new initiative by emailing Director Steve Pike at steve.pike@memphistn.gov.**

Mayor Wharton also pledged to match half of the costs to cover the re-design of **Morris Park**. Over the past two years, VVI has been working with the Morris Park Alliance partners to select a firm to create a new vision for the use of the park that is the gateway to downtown at Poplar Ave. and Manassas. The Morris Park Alliance has selected **Richie Smith Associates** in partnership with **Looney Ricks Kiss Architects** to do the master plan design. The total professional fee for this project is \$70,000. The City is in for \$35,000. **Le Bonheur** and **The Urban Child Institute** have committed to **\$10,000 each**, so that leaves **\$15,000 to be raised** from the smaller stakeholders, individuals and churches. Obviously, the financial stake is important—but even more important is the commitment to the idea of neighbors actually being involved in new ideas and uses for Morris Park.



Knight Foundation rendering of Morris Park, looking east

The Lee House Adaptive Re-Use Plan is moving forward as well. We have been meeting with **Ms. Kelly Rayne**, the Assistant Chief Administrator Officer with the city. There is general approval of the plan. Once the final details are ironed out with the administration, the plan will go to City Council for approval, so please stand by

– we will need your advocacy and emails to the council once the resolution is on the docket. Our friends at the Center City Commission have been a big help in moving this program forward.

*Onward and Upward,
Scott*



VICTORIAN VILLAGE INC. ANNOUNCES THE 2010 PRESERVATION AWARD WINNER

Victorian Village Incorporated has awarded the **2010 Preservation Cup** to the **Memphis Chapter of the Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities (APTA)** in recognition of their **fifty-year** effort in this historic 19th Century neighborhood. Scott Blake, the executive director for VVI, noted, ***“This preservation group, founded in 1953, has been the leading force in telling our heritage story in downtown Memphis. They have been the Keepers of the Flame in some of our darkest days of “urban renewal” in the 60s and 70s. For the last five years the Woodruff-Fontaine House Museum has been the only heritage attraction open in the neighborhood. Now that there is a renaissance happening in the area, it is important that we pay tribute to this enduring institution. Their achievements have been great by any standard, but even more so when one realizes that this is an all-volunteer organization that has been operating strictly on funding from the private sector.”***

The Woodruff-Fountain House, built in 1871, is now a decorative arts museum and special events venue in what was the first suburb of Memphis – now known as Victorian Village. It is a popular wedding site with Memphis brides, and continues to showcase its extensive collection of late Victorian and Edwardian costumes.

Peggy Lovell, president of APTA, accepted the Preservation Cup on behalf of the organization, noting the legacy of early preservationists like Mrs. Eleanor Hughes and Eldridge Wright. *“We are an organization that was created to preserve our heritage, we now have become part of history ourselves,”* Lovell said. *“We are already looking ahead to the next half century and looking for dedicated volunteers of all ages that share our mission and vision.”*



Scott Blake & Peggy Lovell



Magevney House

The **Mallory-Neely** and **Magevney Houses** are truly places to celebrate. These houses are priceless educational mediums for people of all ages to get a sense of their city's past in a way that is impossible to match in the classroom. It is remarkable to see visitor's eyes open wide as they gaze around at the past world they have just stepped into. A world they had little idea ever existed until they walked through the door of these time capsules sitting right in the middle of our hustle and bustle world.

WHY HISTORIC HOUSES MATTER

by Linley Schmidt

Before urban renewal, much of downtown Memphis was Victorian. The city experienced a growth boon during the mid 1800s which resulted in an increase in building at the time. But look around and you will see very little of our Victorian legacy. That is why it is so important to preserve and support the structures still remaining from this past. These homes tell the story of America -- the Irish immigrant who came to find his fortune, the wealthy banker and cotton broker and, of course, the slaves who, thanklessly, kept these families working and socializing in the very ordered, mannerly Victorian society of their time.



The House shows us what it was like to live as a middle class Memphian in the 1830s and 40s. Family items and period furnishings give visitors a glimpse into life in the early days of Memphis. We see what the lives of the wealthy were like further out in the "country"; just a few blocks away on the same street. The magnificently beautiful gaudiness of the Mallory-Neely House was the height of fashion for the late 1800s. Every surface is covered in color and pattern. The restoration work, which was painstakingly executed on its first floor, is unrivaled in the area. Layers of newer paint were picked off with scalpels in order to reveal the Victorian decoration underneath. That layer was then restored bringing the central hall back to the way it looked after the Neely family redecorated in the late 1800s. Adding to the decorative beauty are family furnishings throughout the house. When the Pink Palace reopens these

historic treasures, do yourself a favor and give them a visit. You will be quietly surprised by the Mageveny House and amazed by the Mallory-Neely House. They have been sitting unappreciated by too many for too long. They tell you stories of wealth and privilege, moderation, and even oppression. They belong to you, the citizens of Memphis.

Student Volunteer Organization

A "University Group" named the **Memphis Preservation Society** has formed to support Victorian Village Inc. Its mission is to promote interest in preservation of Memphis' historical structures through activism, volunteer efforts and education. The group will serve student needs and wants regarding preservation efforts in the region, and provide fellowship among students interested in preservation and Memphis' historic cultural heritage.

The group has adopted a set of bylaws, elected officers, and is actively seeking members to join from campuses in the region. Currently students from the University of Memphis make up the membership but the group wishes to include students from other colleges and universities who wish to be a part of this worthy cause.

For more information contact Lauren Kane at lwkane@memphis.edu



Have a sneak peak at Original Memphis

Original Memphis is the name of our heritage tourism initiative created to promote historical sites in Memphis. The initial strategic marketing plan, the branding and identity, and our web site design were funded by a grant from **The Assisi Foundation** and executed by **Counterpart Communications and Design**.

Check out the splash page at

www.originalmemphis.org

This is just the beginning of what we plan to be a major portal for cultural and historical sites that make Memphis such a unique place.

We are currently seeking funding for the next major component of the initiative, the audio/video walking and driving downloadable tours of Victorian Village and Adams Avenue downtown. Maps will be produced along with signage at key stops. All of the tour components will be free of charge to our visitors.

We plan to stage a press conference unveiling of the heritage tourism initiative, but we wanted to let our Friends of Victorian Village in on the news . . . so mum's the word!

Ambassador Tour Guide Program

The Ambassador Tour Guide Program is the training of neighborhood subsidized housing residents to work as tour guides and information sources for visitors to Victorian Village. **Randle Witherington**, professor at the **University of Memphis**, is finalizing the curriculum with his students in the interior design program. Randle and Scott have been meeting with potential ambassadors to invite those interested in attending classes this summer. When they complete the 12-session course, they will be qualified to apply for the part-time positions.

The Ambassador Tour Guide Program is funded by a grant from the **Strengthening Communities** program through the **University of Memphis**. VVI is seeking funding for the implementation of the program.

Neighborhood Watch Meeting

Join us at the next Neighborhood Watch meeting for the Victorian Village neighborhood on **Saturday, April 24 at 10 a.m.** The meeting will take place at **Collins Chapel Church, 678 Washington Avenue, in Fellowship Hall**. Our guest is **Lt. Robert Chalmers** from the Memphis Police Department who will discuss how we can play a part in reducing crime in Victorian Village. Come and meet your fellow neighbors and businesses. If you have questions, **call Victorian Village Inc. at 523-0235. See you there!**



original Neely House, site of the early Juvenile Court

Celebrating 100 Years of Juvenile Court

Victorian Village will host the **Centennial Celebration for the Juvenile Court of Memphis and Shelby County** during three days of festivities. The invitation-only opening ceremonies will take place on **Thursday, September 30, 2010**. Saturday morning, October 2, **The 5K Right Road Run** will begin and end in Victorian Village Park. A free picnic lunch will be held on the lawn of the court that Saturday. During this **“homecoming”** event we plan to interview and record stories of people who have lived, worked, and visited Victorian Village over the last 90 years. **People will be encouraged to bring photos and articles to be scanned that day and added to our archives. Interview stations will be set up to capture your oral histories. So save the date!**