



Landmarks, Inc.

Established 1965

WINTER 2007

Landmark News

The official newsletter of Landmarks, Inc.
Preserving and Protecting Omaha's Built Environment

Landmarks Annual Meeting to be Held at Historic Site

Join us for Landmarks' Annual Meeting on **Saturday February 24, 2007** at a local historic site—the Hupmobile Building at 2523 Farnam Street. At this event, you'll learn what's new at Landmarks for 2007 and about the important progress made in last year's advocacy initiatives. You'll see a presentation of the final endangered list and have the opportunity to tour the building. It's a great way to appreciate this building's significance in the history of Omaha.

You may have driven past the building and wondered about the "Hupmobile" sign so prominently displayed on the structure's façade. The following is an excerpt from a previous edition of the newsletter that includes a bit of history about the building and its former life.

"Prior to World War II, Omaha's automobile row encompassed Farnam from 20th to roughly 26th Street. There you could buy just about any model available, including the Hupmobile. The vehicle was a Detroit product manufactured between 1911 and 1941 and this particular building housed a Hupmobile dealership. There were actually dealerships for this product all over the country at the time, but when the Hupmobile Company dissolved, so did most of the dealership buildings. What stands is the only Hupmobile dealership left in the U.S. today."

Obviously it's not just the building that's important, but what it represents-- a time in history and a way of the life that no longer exists. Learn 'the rest of the story' at the annual meeting.

Here's the timing of the afternoon's events:

2:00 Coffee and Dessert

2:10 Introduction & board member/officer renewal
Approval of last year's meeting minutes

2:20 Review of 2006 - PowerPoint Presentation
What's coming in 2007?

2:25 Preservation Film "Lost Buildings" written by: Ira Glass and Chris Ware
Spotlight on Preservation Activism – 2007 Omaha's Most Endangered Landmarks

3:15 Hupmobile Building Tour

Plan to attend. Mark your calendar today!

Spring Walking Tour Slated for May

Save the date for the ever-popular Spring Tour to be held May 12, 2007. It's a great way to see local landmarks up close and to hear some interesting facts surrounding the sites. The tour also provides a great way to meet others who appreciate Omaha history, like you. We hope to see you there. Remember to tell your friends.

Contact Landmarks if you can volunteer to be a ticket-taker at the tour. The location and other details will be announced soon.

Historical Omaha Rowhouse Destined for National Register

Easter Sunday –1913. The tornado came without warning and cut a path of destruction through a vital section of Omaha. In the aftermath of one of the “storms of the century”, much of North Omaha was destroyed, leaving a thriving area of the city mourning the loss of lives and livelihoods.

In a testament to the tenacity of the people living there, a majority of the area was rebuilt in just a few short months after the devastation-- including a new rowhouse on a site near 25th & Lake Street. In the heart of the African American community, the then new Broomfield Rowhouse sprang up in an area that suffered some of the greatest devastation from that paralyzing storm. Still standing nearly 95 years later, this unique structure will soon take its well-deserved place on the National Register of Historic Places.

Black Architect Designs a Piece of History

Significant not only for its part in the resurgence of a vital area of the city, the Broomfield Rowhouse is one of a number of prominent homes and churches designed by a well-known African American architect of the day, Clarence Wesley (Cap) Wigington. In the early 1900s it was extremely rare to see African American architects. In fact, a 1910 census listed Wigington as only one of 59 black architects, artists and draftsmen living in the United States. His career began in 1902 with a six-year stint at the office of the nationally-known Omaha architect, Thomas R. Kimball. In 1908 this promising architect ventured out on his own and opened his own office. From 1912-1914 he designed not only the rowhouse, but several other single and multiple family dwellings in Omaha. Wigington also designed the well-known Zion Baptist Church in Omaha.

As Wigigton’s mentor, Kimball’s influence is evident in the design of the Broomfield structure. An excerpt from *Cap Wigington, An Architectural Legacy in Ice and Stone*, describes the building this way:

“At first glance, simple rectangles in a craftsman vein, they pierce the skyline with a succession of minutely scaled triangles and rectangles –a sort of Gothicism shorn of religious aspirations...four pilasters rise from a broad pedestal...One can always sense him looking for that one element of the building to put on center stage and wrap with scenic effects, whatever the dictates of the stylistic propriety.”

Though the rowhouse was constructed in 1913, Wigington created the drawings for the design nearly four years earlier, in response to a contest in *Good Housekeeping* magazine. He won the contest with a first prize for the best two-family dwelling.

Original Owner Plays Key Role in Omaha Politics

Equally interesting is the history of the rowhouse’s original owner, Jack Broomfield. A key African American citizen during Omaha’s checkered political past, Broomfield, an ex-Pullman porter, settled in Omaha and played a key role in the politics of the city.

Serving as what was known as an emissary, he was instrumental in guaranteeing a percentage of his community’s vote for a particular candidate, in exchange for that candidate’s consideration of his community ‘s interests. Broomfield also owned and ran the Midway, a nationally known saloon and gambling hall, at 1124 Capitol Avenue. This venture helped ensure he retired as a wealthy man.

The Broomfield Rowhouse was selected for the Register under the following criteria:

Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of a construction or represents the role of a master, or possesses a high artistic value, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

With the placing of this building on the historic register, an important Omaha legacy is preserved for now and hopefully for generations to come.

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