

West Adams Matters

A Victorian Era Jewel

WAHA's Annual Holiday Tour Includes Col. John E. Stearns/Dockweiler Residence

By Janice Robinson



The two-story house at 27 St. James Park, with the wrought iron letter "S" on its front gate and the initials "D/S" on its chimneys, reflects 90 years in the lives of two early Los Angeles families – the Stearns and the Dockweilers.

The house, one of the featured landmarks on next month's Holiday Tour, slated for the weekend of December 4-5, was completed in 1900 for Col. John Eldredge Stearns, his wife, Julia, and their only child, Julia Katherine Stearns, who used the name Katherine and was then 12 years old. Col. Stearns, a Chicago native, had a pioneer's wanderlust and desire to build his family's fortunes. He brought his bride to the town of Nampa, Idaho, in 1887, just after the railroad arrived. Stearns was the first to establish a livery stable and feed barn in the town, and soon was serving as Nampa's first mayor. A decade later, when he retired from business and the practice of real estate in Nampa, Stearns and his family moved to Los Angeles.

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WAHA General Meeting at John Tracy Clinic

Friday, November 12

The John Tracy Clinic, a highly acclaimed educational center for parents of infants and preschool children with hearing losses, celebrated its 60th year of free family services in 2003. We are delighted that the Clinic is hosting an evening tour for WAHA members, on Friday, November 12, at 7 p.m., so we can learn about this world-class institution located right here in the Historic West Adams District.

After Spencer and Louise Tracy's infant son, John, was diagnosed with profound hearing loss in 1925, Mrs. Tracy devoted her time and energy to studying how deaf children could be taught to communicate with the hearing and speaking world. She patiently guided her son, John, into an understanding of language and lip-reading. With her encouragement, he learned to speak. In 1942, Mrs. Tracy responded to a desperate call for help from twelve other mothers of young deaf children by founding John Tracy Clinic.

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A Victorian Holiday in North University Park

On the first weekend of each December, the West Adams Heritage Association presents an annual Holiday Historic Homes Tour and Progressive Dinner. This year's tour, A Victorian Holiday, scheduled for December 4 and 5, harkens back to the 19th century and the West Adams District's beginnings, in the neighborhoods now known as North University Park.

The tour will feature festive, Victorian-inspired holiday décor, and a menu drawn from an 1890s cookbook. Among the beautifully-restored Victorian landmarks to be showcased this year are the gracious Colonial Revival Stearns-Dockweiler residence, designed by architect John Parkinson for Col. John E. Stearns, and the Durfee Residence, an 1885 Eastlake-style home nicknamed "The Pink Lady," which both sit in the University Park Historic Preservation Overlay Zone. (The Pink Lady also hosts WAHA's Holiday Party on December 12; please see page 12).

The oldest home in the North University Park National Register Historic District – the c.1890 Eastlake-style Miller & Herriott Residence – will also open its carved doors. The tour also features the William Wylie Cockins Residence, an 1894 Queen Anne now owned by the University of Southern California, and the 1896 Davis Residence, now the 29th Street Cafe.

For complete details on taking, or volunteering for, the tour, please see page 9. ●



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John Tracy Clinic

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Mrs. Tracy established programs to educate and offer emotional support to parents and their preschool deaf youngsters, free of charge. By encouraging parents to build a foundation of communication with their young children during the critical language development stage from birth through age five, the Clinic she founded has enabled thousands of boys and girls to master the challenges of oral communication.

Today, over 100,000 families from all over the world have benefited from JTC programs during their child's preschool years.

The Clinic is considered a pioneering organization in parent-centered, speech and language education for babies and preschool children with hearing losses. It offers audiological assessments, parent/infant classes and counseling, along with a preschool and two accredited teacher education programs. Its correspondence courses serve annually over 2,500 families in as many as 140 countries around the world, and its community hearing screening program reaches over 16,000 preschool children per year in Los Angeles and three surrounding counties.

The Clinic is the only education center of its kind to provide all family services free; its intensive three-week summer sessions are unique among schools for the deaf; its sibling program is used as a model for deaf schools nationwide; and, in collaboration with the University of Southern California (USC), it offers the nation's first, online Master's Degree in early childhood deaf education.

John Tracy Clinic is supported entirely by private donations, bequests and grants.

Please join WAHA on Friday evening, November 12, at the John Tracy Clinic, 806 West Adams Blvd. The event is a potluck – please bring a dish to share. ●



Mrs. Spencer Tracy helps out at the John Tracy Clinic.

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Cimarron Street Bake Sale A Success

The cider was warm and the cookies sweet at the bake sale coordinated by Angelus Vista neighbors Betty Walton and Laura Harris of Cimarron Street October 16th.

The purpose of the sale was to raise funds for a Neighborhood Matching Fund grant to beautify the exterior of the LAPD Stop-in/Community Center of Arlington Heights on Washington Boulevard at 10th Avenue. Lots of neighbors, plus lots of passers-by, stopped to purchase a cookie or cake and to drink a cup of coffee.

Councilman Martin Ludlow and his deputy John Choi were in attendance as well as LAPD Senior Lead Officer Eva Perry. All brought baked goods back to their colleagues to enjoy. Enough cash in hand was raised to begin electrical work for new outside lights to be installed at the center.

Special thanks go to Johnnie Green of Eureka Coffee Café across the street from the center who donated the hot coffee for the event as well as Mr. Yu of Hanson Meat Market on 18th Street who made a monetary donation and of course all the neighbors who baked, donated money or volunteered time.

Save the date: Community Information Fair planned for Saturday, December 11, when the new rehabbed Stop-In Center will be "unveiled." ●



L-R, Myrtle Bankhead, Laura Harris, Councilmember Martin Ludlow, Brenda Bankhead and Betty Walton

Preservation Matters: Stoddard House Update

By Jim Childs

In September, we wrote about the illegal demolition (on Friday, August 13) of the 1895 Stoddard House, located at 1458 West 23rd Street. The Victorian Cottage was a contributing historic resource to the University Park Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (UP/HPOZ). The UP/HPOZ Board called for an immediate investigation and asked for all appropriate remedies. In response to the UP/Board request and that of Councilmember Ed Reyes, CD#1, the Los Angeles Department of Building & Safety began an inquiry into the matter.

On September 29th a public hearing was conducted by the LADBS at their headquarters, 201 North Figueroa, in their 9th floor Boardroom. The purpose of the hearing was to gather sworn testimony about the demolition itself and to create a formal report for the B&S Supervisor's determination. A demolition without a permit is a violation under Section 91.106.1 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code and punishable under L.A.M.C. Section 91.106.4.1 known as the "scorched earth" ordinance.

That Section states: "The department shall have the authority to withhold a building permit or relocation permit for a site if the department determines that the demolition or relocation work has been done on the site without benefit of required demolition or relocation permits. If the department, after notice and hearing, makes this determination, the department shall also have the authority to record an affidavit with the County Recorder stating that no permits for any new development shall be issued on the property for a period of five years."

The Hearing Examiner, Hector Buitraga, explained that the testimony would be under oath, under penalty of perjury, and was open to cross-examination. The hearing began with a Staff report of the incident prepared by B&S Principal Inspector Alan Wendell. The report contained: a chronology of events, permit history, site maps, photographs, B&S Inspector's notes and materials supplied by the HPOZ Board. Inspector Wendell's concluding testimony was that there was a structure at 1458 West 23rd Street which was demolished on-or-about Friday, August 13 without any appropriate permits. The report's elements were

(continued on page 4)

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Stoddard House Update

continued from page 3

received by the Hearing Examiner and individually marked as evidence.

The subject property's owner, the Sung Kwang Presbyterian Church, had many members from their congregation and their pastor, the Reverend Frank Lee, in attendance. However, only their consultant and agent, Min Yee, testified about the incident. She reported that the Church had bought the property in 2004, unaware of the UP/HPOZ, and at that time the house was a public nuisance. She stated that they had hired a contractor, CAL-PAC, to demolish the house in order to expand their parking lot and assumed that their contractor would take out any required permits. During cross-examination she reported that the Church had only owned their principal building at 1357 West 24th Street for two years. A neighboring property owner gave testimony that the house had been a public nuisance and that concluded the Church's explanation.

I, as UP/HPOZ Board Secretary, gave testimony that when the City's process for approval of our HPOZ was being conducted in 1999 all property owners were officially notified and at that time the records showed that the Sung Kwang Church owned three properties on 24th Street and were therefore notified separately for each parcel. I also reported that in the last two years delivery of our semi-annual bi-lingual newsletter, the University Park Chronicle had been mailed to the Church via US Mail (the Chronicle is made possible through a grant from WAHA). Since the issues were not returned the delivery was assumed and the information about the UP/HPOZ available. I requested that the "scorched-earth" provisions be enforced and suggested that the only future remedy for the site would be for a move-on of an equal historic house.

UP/HPOZ Board Chair and WAHA Vice-President Jean Frost gave testimony as to the demolition itself and spoke of the impacts to the historic streetscape. She stated that beyond the significant loss of the individual historic home the resulting gap-tooth scarring of the streetscape undermined the very purpose for the creation of a HPOZ. She explained that it was in the collective designation that the strength of the Historic District is centered and that the removal of even one single element impacted the whole. She also requested implementation of the "scorched-earth" provisions.

Frank Acevedo, Acting Chair and Vice President of the North Area Neighborhood Development Council N.C., gave testimony on behalf of the larger West Adams community. He spoke of the regrettable loss of part of the community's historic fabric and the loss of desperately needed housing stock for the creation of a surface parking lot. He pointed out that all developers no matter who they may be had to respect the community and adhere to the required process procedures. He stated that although creating a vacant lot for five years in itself was not beneficial for the community, B&S should invoke the "scorched-earth" provisions and send a clear message that such unlawful behavior had a penalty.

The Los Angeles Conservancy Director of Preservation Issues, Ken Bernstein, testified that it was imperative that B&S take a strong stance in this case. He reported that he had just come from City Hall hearing that approved the City's 20th HPOZ, Windsor Square. He stated that the success or failure of the City's Preservation Overlay Zones would be determined by the enforcement of the rule of law. He explained that without significant sanctions scofflaw developers would ignore process. He reminded the Hearing Examiner that it had been little more than a year ago that he had given testimony in the Giese House demolition which was the City's first test of the "scorched-earth" penalty. He also request that those sanctions be applied in this case.

The testimony being concluded the Hearing Examiner informed the assembly that copies of his finalized report would be sent to the interested parties. He explained that when the B&S Supervisor reached a determination that decision was appealable to the B&S Commission. ●



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Resources by Suzie Henderson, Resources Columnist

Fall is officially here – evidenced by all the recent rain rain. For all we know, we are in for perhaps a lot of rain this year, if the El Nino predictions come true. Now is the time to prepare.

Be sure to check out your gutters. Once again, Michael and Diana come to our rescue with Ambrosio Luna. They say he does beautiful work, on time and at reasonable prices. I can also recommend Gene Reeves at Tip Top Construction. Gene started out as a roofer and gutter specialist, before becoming a general contractor.

If water of another sort is your problem, Diana says call The Drain Company. Her favorite plumber, Brian Kaiser, recommended them and they were exceptional. Not only were they professional on the phone, they were on time and only charged \$39 to unplug her kitchen sink. She was pleased and amazed.

Laura Harris has also recommended Brian Kaiser as reasonable and reliable, but she recommends against his "friends" that patch and plaster. If your water problem is a leaky shower pan, Marianne Muellerleile highly recommends JH Shower pans to hot mop before replacing the tiles.

If you need tile, Diana recommends B&W Tile Co., Inc. She says this is the place to purchase your old railroad tile. They stock three different grades in multiple colors at reasonable prices. She also recommends Jerusalem Stone Collection, Inc. to purchase marble or stone. They also make gorgeous granite counters. She says speak to Abe Judah and, of course, tell him Diana sent you.

Finally, Audrey had a great experience with a local hardwood floor person, Santos Vasquez. She says he repaired a big hole in her floor left from the removal of a floor furnace. His work was skillful, reasonably priced and he cleaned up thoroughly.

Thanks to all the helpful Wahonians who sent in resources this month. I look forward to hearing your suggestions. Please contact me at WestAdamsGoddess@aol.com. ●

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Stearns-Dockweiler Residence: A Victorian Jewel

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Their new home was built on a 4 1/2-acre site at the "N.E. corner of Scarff and West 25th streets," but the address was changed two years later to 27 St. James Park. The park and its surrounding lots had been developed by Judge Charles Silent from his estate on the outskirts of the city. Postcards of the day said the park was "for the exclusive use of the residents who reside by the side and is a part of the property of several millionaires whose homes adjoin it."

The Stearns house was the second-largest on the park. The largest house, and all but one of the others, have been demolished.

For his architect, Stearns chose English-born John Parkinson, who had worked in the Napa Valley and Seattle before moving to Southern California. Parkinson's houses are rare, for he quickly found success in commercial buildings. He and his firms went on to design such Los Angeles landmarks as the Bullocks-Wilshire Building on Wilshire Boulevard, the Coliseum, Union Station, City Hall (in collaboration), several department stores on Broadway, and many of the office towers on Spring Street.

The design of the house at 27 St. James Park is described as follows, in documents filed in 1989 in support of its designation as a historic-cultural monument:

"The structure is of Classical Revival design and is a two-story, U-shaped house with a hipped roof and a two-story pedimented portico dominating the principal facade. Prominent architectural features include diamond-paned glass windows, four two-story Ionic columns, and a dentiled pediment containing an arched panel."

Behind the house is a stable/coach house, complete with its four original stalls, drains, grain chutes and hayloft, now converted to an apartment. Behind the coach house is a small, one-bedroom cottage that housed the Stearns' cook. These two buildings were originally one but were separated early in the 20th century.

Col. Stearns expanded his back yard by moving an existing two-story house off the property. That house, which faced St. James Park, now stands at 2342 Scarff St., behind the Stearns property, and is itself a designated monument.

Col. Stearns died in 1927 and his wife in 1935; they were buried in a family vault in Chicago. In the meantime, about 1917-1919, daughter Katherine had married a neighbor, Thomas Aloysius Joseph Dockweiler, who joined the Stearns household. Thomas was the eldest of 11 children of Isidore and Gertrude Dockweiler, a prominent Los Angeles family who lived on Adams Boulevard.

The Dockweiler name has been associated with Los Angeles history for nearly 150 years. Consider Dockweiler State Beach, and West Adams' own Dockweiler Post Office, on South Vermont. Among many other pursuits, the family became major supporters of Loyola Marymount University, which now maintains historical archives on the Dockweilers.

According to the LMU's narrative history,

"The first Dockweiler in Los Angeles, Henry (1824-1887), originally came from Bavaria to the Buffalo, New York area around 1848 at the age of 14. Like thousands of other 49ers, he caught gold fever and crossed the Isthmus of Panama to try his hand in the diggings of northern California. In 1852, apparently unsuccessful at prospecting, Henry pulled up stakes and left for Los Angeles, then just a small town physically centered on what is now the Plaza area. In 1861 in his new hometown, he married Margaretha Sugg Dockweiler (1827-1924), also an emigrant and whom he had originally met in the Buffalo area.

"Henry became part owner of the La Fayette [sic] Hotel, one of the social and political centers of old Los Angeles, and also operated other businesses, such as a saloon called the Castle Dome on Main and Spring streets, not far from the La Fayette located at the three hundred block of Main. Undoubtedly, this establishment also served as a social and political center.

"In politics, he was an active Republican, who supported the North in the Civil War, served on the Los Angeles City (or Common) Council and eventually joined a California reform party, called the People's Independent Party. In short, Henry's vigorous activities in Los Angeles business and politics established the Dockweiler name in city affairs. Henry and Margaretha were devout Roman Catholics, noted for their faithfulness to the Church and good works for charity, admirable traits that their



Isidore Dockweiler

descendants would inherit."

Isidore Dockweiler had been born in 1868, the son of immigrants from Bavaria, and was baptized in the old Plaza church, which still stands on Olivera Street. He rose to found the prestigious law firm Dockweiler & Dockweiler, whose members included three of his sons, Thomas, Henry, and Frederick. Among its many clients numbered Hollywood celebrities, John Paul Getty, the Mexican state of Baja California, and corporations, such as Security-First National Bank. Famously, Isidore Dockweiler acted as a special trial prosecutor on behalf of Mrs. Griffith, who had been shot in the face by her husband, the eccentric and alcoholic Col. Griffith J. Griffith (the man who donated Griffith Park to the City).





Dockweiler family
Christmas tree

A prominent Catholic layman, Isidore Dockweiler was also influential in Democratic politics, serving for 13 years as state committeeman for California. He supervised William Jennings Bryan's 1896 presidential campaign tour through southern California. According to LMU, "In 1902, he ran for lieutenant governor on the Democratic gubernatorial ticket of Franklin Lane, which lost, but barely, to the Republican George C. Lane. Isidore was a delegate to the 1908, 1936, and 1940 Democratic National Conventions, and from 1916 to 1932 served as Democratic National Committeeman from California. In 1926, reacting to the power of William McAdoo in the California Democratic Party and his pro-Volstead Act sentiments, anti-McAdoo and 'wet' Democrats, such as James Phelan, drafted Isidore to run for senator in the Democratic primary against John B. Elliott, whom McAdoo supported. Isidore lost, but Elliott fell in the general election to Republican Samuel M. Shortridge."

Isidore was involved in Los Angeles' civic life as well. He served as the president of the Los Angeles Public Library, and was also president of the La Fiesta Association.

Isidore's brother, Major John Henry Dockweiler, was city engineer in 1888-89 and 1896-98, during which Los Angeles' Third Street tunnel through Bunker Hill, and its outfall sewer to the sea, were constructed.

Of Isidore and Gertude's 11 children, one became a congressman and later district attorney of Los Angeles, one an admiral, one a Superior Court judge, one a medical doctor, one a diplomat and Democratic state treasurer, and one an unsuccessful candidate for mayor.

Thomas, the eldest, was a prominent attorney in his own right whose own clients included the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles. For many years he was president of the city's social Services

Commission and for several years was a member of the State Committee of Bar Examiners. Like his father, he was a prominent layman, and both were appointed Knights of St. Gregory.

Isidore and Gertrude were still living with his parents when Thomas was born in 1892. But as the elder Dockweiler's fortunes and law practice expanded, he moved from one Victorian house to another, each more imposing than the last. In 1905, the Dockweilers purchased an imposing Victorian mansion at 957 West Adams Street (pictured at right).

In 1928, Isidore and Gertrude moved nearby, to 2321 South Figueroa Street, where they lived until her 1937 death. The Dockweilers donated this house to the Sisters of Social Service,
(continued next page)



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Stearns-Dockweiler Residence:

A Victorian Jewel

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who turned it into the "Stella Maris" house used for their social work.

Katherine Stearns Dockweiler, as she was known after her marriage to Thomas, was active in a number of leading social and charitable organizations. She was chairman of Las Madrinas (sponsors of Los Angeles' annual debutante ball) and president of the Social Services Auxiliary of the Sisters of Social Service. In 1949, she chaired a fund-raising polo match whose participants included Will Rogers, movie maker Hal Roach, and movie star Robert Montgomery.

Thomas and Katherine had two children – a son, dermatologist John E. S. Dockweiler, and a daughter, Julia Stearns Dockweiler. John married but did not have children. Julia, who never married, was active in social, charitable and musical organizations.

In 1990, after her parents and brother had passed away, Julia sold the house to Jim and Janice Robinson. ●

WAHA's Membership Committee is Back Up and Running

The Membership Committee wishes to apologize to any members who may have been inconvenienced during this year's Membership renewal.

During the summer we had some health issues which resulted in some confusion, some slow mail retrieval and several "lost" membership renewals. We do sincerely apologize on those fronts. We also want all WAHA Members to know that we now are current with all membership matters and are working on a new Membership Directory.

If you feel there is still an issue with your membership, please give John Kurtz a call (323-732-2990) and we will see if we can get it corrected. Thanks! ●

Participate in WAHA's Holiday Tour!

You are invited to toast North University Park's Victorian past, and its 21st Century future by participating, as a guest or as a volunteer, at this year's WAHA Holiday Tour.

As always, this year's Holiday Tour is WAHA's biggest volunteer event. By the time the weekend is over, we will have thanked, literally, hundreds of volunteers who have served as docents, tour guides, greeters, reservations and check-in team, logistics managers, house captains, kitchen captains and assistants (and, yes, dishwashers), food servers, researchers, costumers, decorators, babysitters, schleppers and clean-up crew. We hope one of those volunteers will be YOU. If you would like to volunteer please call this year's volunteer coordinator, SeElcy Caldwell at 323-291-7484. Please don't hesitate to call - we will need all the helping hands we can muster, and especially for newcomers this is a great way to meet neighbors and fellow preservationists.

Please be assured, we try to pay great attention to the care and comfort of our volunteers. There will be plenty of food, plus work breaks (well, we hope!), and time set aside for all volunteers to tour a selection of this year's houses. WAHA will also, as always, schedule a lovely holiday fete later in December for all WAHA members and all Tour volunteers (details to follow in the next newsletter). Over the years, WAHA members have often invited their out-of-area friends and work colleagues to join them as volunteers (that is, if they aren't participating as paying guests), and we encourage you to do this as well.

Please contact SeElcy if you'd like to volunteer as a docent, in kitchen and/or food prep capacities, check-in or logistics. Jacqueline Hill (323-766-8842) would be able to use your help if you are available during the day in the week before the tour to do pick-ups and deliveries to the various tour houses, or if you can help decorate in the evenings.

We also need "Bus Wranglers" to, basically, sit on the buses that will shuttle our Tour guests to some of the houses. The Wranglers will help direct the drivers to the proper locations, in the proper timeframe, and will also help our guests on and off the buses. The task is a VERY IMPORTANT cog in this year's wheel, and we really need your help. Please contact Peggy King (323-735-8485).

The Holiday Tour is WAHA's major annual fundraising event (which pays for this newsletter as well as our many preservation support and advocacy activities). We encourage all of our members to take the tour - and bring their friends - on the day they are not volunteering.

Ticket prices this year will stay at last year's level - \$75 for non-members, \$65 for WAHA members. We have already mailed out postcards with sign-up details for this often sold-out event. If you have not received your invitation, visit www.WestAdamsHeritage.com for a copy. (Each year, some of you wish to purchase large groups of tickets, and we love that you do so - but please contact WAHA Treasurer Jim Meister directly NOW to reserve your block of seats). Please be sure to return the forms and your checks as early as possible, so that you and your guests will not be disappointed. ●

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over asking!

227 No. Rampart, Silverlake—B,S
1644 West 23rd Street—S
4468 W. 28th St—B

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We support preservation of the West Adams community's architectural heritage and beautification activities, and seek to educate Los Angeles' citizens and others about cultural heritage and restoration techniques.



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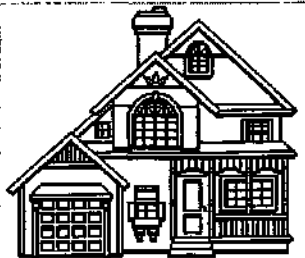
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Calendar ✓

WAHA General Meeting

Friday, November 12
7 p.m.

at the John Tracy Clinic
806 West Adams Boulevard

The John Tracy Clinic, a highly acclaimed educational center for parents of infants and preschool children with hearing losses, celebrated its 60th year of free family services in 2003.

We are delighted that the Clinic is hosting an evening tour for WAHA members, on Friday, November 12, at 7 p.m., so we can learn about this world-class institution located right here in the Historic West Adams District.

The event is a potluck – please bring a dish to share.

Jingle Bells, and All That Jazz— The Pink Lady Hosts WAHA Holiday Party

Mark your calendars for Sunday afternoon, December 12, for WAHA's festive annual Holiday Party, to be held, like the tour itself, in North University Park, at the Durfee Residence, also known as "The Pink Lady". All WAHA members — plus Holiday Tour volunteers — are invited. Bring yourself, dress-up party! (This soiree is NOT a potluck.) Details to follow in the December *West Adams Matters* newsletter.



The WAHA Newsletter is a publication of the West Adams Heritage Association. Members and supporters of WAHA are invited to submit articles to the Newsletter. Letters will be published subject to space constraints and will be cut for length if necessary. Articles will be published subject to acceptance by the editors of the WAHA Board. Advertising is subject to the approval of the publishers. Although the Association appreciates its many fine advertisers, the Association does not accept responsibility for claims made by advertisers. Services and products are not tested and appearance of advertising does not imply, nor does it constitute, endorsement by the West Adams Heritage Association. Copyright 2004. All rights for graphic and written material appearing in the newsletter are reserved. Contact Director of Publications for permission.



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