

# THE Capitol Hill Neighborhood Council BULLETIN



## Capitol Hill & Avenues Mobile Watch Meeting

When: 21 February 2007, 6:00 p.m.  
Where: State Capitol Cafeteria

## Capitol Hill Neighborhood Council Meeting

When: 21 February 2007, 6:30 p.m.  
Where: State Capitol Cafeteria

### Preliminary Agenda:

- 6:30 Greeting by Chair, Polly Hart
- 6:35 Police Report
- 6:45 Mobile Watch Report
- 6:55 Reports by Elected Officials
- 7:15 Report by Gwen Springmeyer, Mayor's Office
- 7:25 Condo Conversion presentation: 38 E 300 North, Justin Marty
- 7:45 West Capitol Street Development: comments and vote, Jeremy Jones
- 8:20 Nominations for vacant trustee positions
- 8:30 Adjourn

**NEXT MEETING**  
MARCH 21, 2007 - 6:30 p.m.

### Capitol Hill Neighborhood Council Members

Chair	Polly Hart	355-7203
Vice-Chair	Georg Stutzenberger	510-1603
Vice-Chair	Robert King	359-9992
Secretary/Treasurer	Christine Hobby	328-2684
Historian	Hermoine Jex	364-5326

### Neighborhood Trustees

Capitol	Carol Wood	355-6475
DeSoto/Cortez	Lorille Miller	363-8191
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Kimball	Victoria Collard	595-8575
St. Marks	Nephi Kemmethmueller	359-3936
Swedetown	William Salas	539-0938
Temple	Gene Simmons	364-3830
Warm Springs	Minta Brandon	355-1363
Washington	...election pending...election pending...	
West High	Erlinda Davis	531-1964
Mobile Watch	Robert King	359-9992
Web Site	Nick Burns	<a href="mailto:nick@vanburns.com">nick@vanburns.com</a>

### Bulletin Staff

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## Find Out About This Old House

Architectural historian J. Cory Jensen wrote, "For the most part, the history of a building is the history of its occupants. For many people, knowing something about who built and lived in their house provides a connection to the structure, and they then become the next link in that chain of history. A building is basically a conglomeration of connected materials, a 'nice pile of bricks' until people occupy it, and then it takes on character and life. It seems to be this character that entices historic building owners to research their building's past." Over the next few issues of the newsletter, we will look at the resources available to owners who want to find out about the history of the buildings around them.

The residents of lower Capitol Hill benefit from the research efforts of historians during the "good ole days" of about 25 years ago, when budgets allowed the staff at State History to conduct research on every building within the Capitol Hill Historic District. Though the days of those budgets are long gone, the research on these buildings is available in the files of the Preservation Office at State History. State History, perhaps better known by the name of one of its programs, the Utah State Historical Society, is located in the Rio Grande depot at 300 West Rio Grande. Site forms for each property include an architectural description of the building including its original use, architectural type and style and construction date. The names of the architect and builder are also noted for some buildings. The forms also include a detailed history of the property's owners from the time of construction until the 1940s. All this data will allow you to skip some steps and fill in information from other sources.

For buildings outside the historic district, you have to find this information from its original sources. However, it is still worth a call to the Preservation Office to see if there is any information already compiled on your building; over 90,000 buildings in the state have some information on file.

Because a building's history is tied to that of its former occupants, the first area that should be tackled in building research is a title search. This is perhaps the most tedious part of the process and can require some time and concentration. By doing a complete title search you find out who all the owners of the building were, which can then guide your biographical research. Title records are located at the Salt Lake County Recorder's Office, located at 2001 S. State Street, Room #N1600. With a little help from the recorders office staff in how to trace ownership transactions in the title abstract, you should be able to do the rest of the work. Records are computerized back to 1983, and from there you will need to go to the handwritten title abstract books, located in the Recorder's main vault.

Although various recordings are made in the title abstract (i.e., mortgage payments, tax sales, reconveyances, trustee deeds, etc.) the "instrument" you should primarily look for is a deed or warranty deed (usually written as "WD"), since these signify a change of ownership. Trust deeds and quit-claim deeds might also indicate a change of owners, but not always. A sudden increase in property value, as noted from one deed transaction to the next, can indicate when a building was constructed on a lot. Also, mortgage payments may be helpful in indicate when a building was constructed.

Once you have completed the title search, you will have a list of all those who owned the building and you can do individual biographical research on them (We will cover this in a future issue). Before you leave the County offices, you should visit the County Archives, located in Room #N4100 (Now open by appointment, call 468-2330 to arrange one) and obtain a copy of the building's tax file. This will have basic information, such as materials used, a record of additions (if they were officially permitted), square footage, and a date of construction (however, be forewarned, the

*(Continued on page 2)*

*(Continued from page 4)*

After training assignments in Virginia and Maine, Frank and Hermoine moved back to Salt Lake City when he was stationed for a time at Fort Douglas. Frank then served with the Office of Strategic Services, working with distinction with the Dutch underground until war's end. In the meantime Hermoine and (by then) their two infant sons moved to Capitol Hill and lived in two apartments on North Main Street, then with her parents and with Frank's parents in the Jex family home on Wall Street.

After Frank's return, they moved into one of the Noall apartments at 414 North Wall, for \$35.00 a month. An additional son and a daughter joined them here, and in 1953, they purchased Frank's family home at 272 North Wall Street. They remodeled extensively, and the family has lived there since. "The home is now filled with sentimental mementoes," Hermoine recently wrote, "such as Dutch wooden shoes, braided rugs, and worn oak tables. The 'ancient' refrigerator with interior wooden framed doors is still running." Frank taught psychology at the University of Utah until his retirement; he died in 1996. Hermoine has ten grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

As time went on and her family grew, Hermoine became alarmed at development patterns and proposals that impaired the beauty and historic character of Capitol Hill – the sycamores on 300 West were torn out, for example; original location and construction of the 600 North on-ramp impaired the value of adjacent homes; the McCormick mansion on Main Street was razed; a road from Bountiful over East Capitol and down State Street was proposed. She increasingly learned that government plans or assurances were not always what they appeared at first blush; that private development often proceeded without regard for neighborhood livability; and that one could make a significant difference for good by learning the real nature and consequences of proposed changes, raising questions, calling for accountability.

In 1971 Hermoine and eight others signed articles of incorporation for the

Capitol Hill Awareness Team (which became the Capitol Hill Neighborhood Council in 1975), and she and Glen Lloyd were its first co-chairs. To list the fights Hermoine has successfully waged to preserve our neighborhood over the last thirty-plus years would take pages, but would surely include her critical role in saving the McCune Mansion from destruction, forestalling the extension of West Temple along Quince Street, and "fighting against proposals to widen State Street, build a bridge over City Creek Canyon and Memory Grove . . . place a diagonal road through Salt Lake City, purchase and demolish homes between 300 North and Hillside," and many other "extensive land use and transportation battles."

No stranger to controversy, she is a familiar (and by some, feared) figure at public hearings, government offices, legislative committee rooms, corporate board rooms, and elsewhere, always alert to the interests of the residents of Capitol Hill. And her influence has extended far beyond merely opposing ill-considered changes – she has been an active force in fostering neighborhood improvement and in inspiring others to do likewise. "Hermoine was the one who really taught me that, if we wanted to do things and were willing to work hard and be persistent, we could do it," says Erlinda Davis, Neighborhood Council trustee. "Many of us have stayed here because of her influence." Adds City Council member Eric Jergensen, "Hermoine has been keenly aware of our community needs, especially in historic preservation, and has been extremely diligent in assuring that those needs are met. We're lucky to have such a rare jewel as our friend and neighbor."

In spite of all this, Hermoine downplays her role. "It's the teamwork that counts," she insists. "It's working together, sharing ideas."

And still she presses on, actively furthering the protection and enhancement of our area. Asked how she keeps going, Hermoine smiles and says, "That's what my father did. You don't just sit still."



*(Continued from page 1)*

construction dates in tax files are not usually accurate and may actually indicated the date of an addition or some other alteration to the house). Just as importantly, there may also be an historic tax photo. These can be particularly valuable in restoring a house that has been altered. The photos may date to the 1930s, although updates typically were made in the 1960s and later. Although you might think that the 1930s is a little late for a photographs indicating what your pre-20<sup>th</sup> century house may have looked like originally, keep in mind that in many cases, modernization of Victorian-era houses was not very common until the 1930s-1950s. So, there is a good chance that the photo will show what your house with historical architectural details.

For buildings in Salt Lake City constructed between 1890 and 1927, the Utah History Information Center at State History (also in the Rio Grande Depot) has copies of the city's building permit registers. These provide the date the permit was issued, the address of the property, the estimated cost of construction, a brief description of the building, the name of the owner, and sometimes the names of the architect and builder. If your house was constructed during that time period, the building permit can provide the most accurate date of construction.

After 1927, permit information for Salt Lake City buildings was kept in a card file. The cards have been digitized and indexed, allowing for easy searches. However, the records are not yet online, so a visit to the City Permits Office in Room 215 of the City and County Building at 451 S. State Street is necessary to get the information. The building card will list the type of permit and date issued, along with a brief description of the work. The card is also useful for determining the dates of additions and alterations to the building, though often work was done without a permit. The invoices for the permits have also been digitized and are searchable – often the invoice will have additional information not noted on the building card.

Looking for an old photo of your historic house? Look online at <http://www.assessor.slco.org/> Go to "Parcel Search Page," then enter the address or tax number of your building. Select the correct address from the list, then look in the upper left hand corner for a small photo. Click on the photo for a better view, though the images are poor resolution. Better copies are available from the SL County Archives; call 468-2330 for more information.

Next month: Maps, photos, and city directories.

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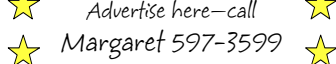
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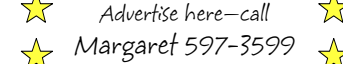
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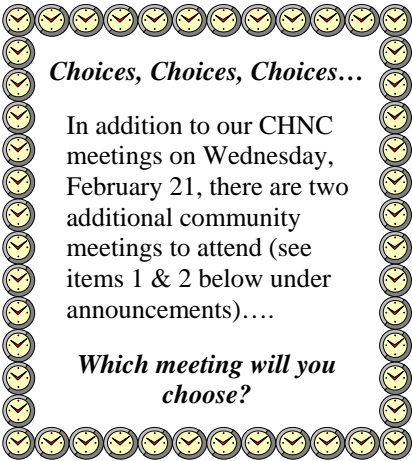
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The Capitol Hill Neighborhood Council Bulletin is published monthly  
by the Capitol Hill Neighborhood Council  
c/o 70 West Zane Avenue, Salt Lake City, UT 84103  
Our sincere thanks to LDS Hospital for printing this bulletin.

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**Choices, Choices, Choices...**

In addition to our CHNC meetings on Wednesday, February 21, there are two additional community meetings to attend (see items 1 & 2 below under announcements)....

**Which meeting will you choose?**

**FEATURED NEIGHBOR**

**Hermoine Jex**

*(Editors' note: Hermoine Jex, a long-time advocate for Capitol Hill, co-chair of our community council when it first was formed in 1971, and a great friend to our council and neighborhood, passed away at her home on Wall Street on January 31, 2007. In tribute to Hermoine, we re-print the following sketch of her which first ran in the October, 2002 Bulletin.)*



Hermoine Jex has indisputably been the Capitol Hill neighborhood's most visible and dedicated advocate for the past 35 years. What makes her tick? If you ask her that, she'll probably talk about her parents.

When her father, Aaron Tracy, was president of Weber State Academy (now Weber State University) in the 1920's and '30's, he would make an inspection tour each Saturday night of Ogden's infamous 25<sup>th</sup> Street; he had promised his students' parents that he would look after their children, and he wanted to be sure that none of them were courting harm in a bad part of town. In that and numerous other pro-active ways, "he wouldn't let his students fail. He was always doing for others." His service over the years included successful campaigns to save Weber State and Snow College after they were donated to the State of Utah. He also had an abiding interest in historic preservation – his Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Chicago was on the old Salt Lake Theatre, and during the summers while he was in residence there, he took his children to visit then-unpreserved LDS historic sites (such as the old temple site at Nauvoo).

**Neighborhood Guardian**

"We were all programmed from birth to be interested in things," Hermoine states. "When you've grown up in an atmosphere like that, you're sort of aware of things going on around you, aren't you?"

Hermoine, the eldest of eight children of Aaron and Ethel Marriott Tracy, was born at Dee Hospital in Ogden, attended by Dr. Morrell, "the only doctor my mother could stand." (Her mother, as vibrant and active as her father, lived to be 99.) Hermoine recalls

a full childhood with a "huge" extended family – "reunions and reunions and food all over the place." She and a large group of cousins regularly put on original plays and undertook other major projects. "We thought we were pretty hot stuff."

After graduating from Ogden High, Hermoine attended Weber State and then Utah State, where she graduated with a degree in English. She taught in elementary schools in Ogden, finding time also to serve a three-month mission for the LDS Church in the Northwest.

"I was engaged quite a few times, but in those days you didn't get married because there was no money. You waited." Her parents often invited soldiers for meals during the World War II years, and one day a young intelligence officer named Frank Jex showed up late for dinner. All of the main course had been eaten, but Hermoine saw to it that Frank got a plate of dessert. Although she was then engaged to another young man, she and Frank were mutually attracted, and they married in June, 1942.

*(Continued on page 2)*

**CAPITOL HILL NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1. The evening of our February meeting there will be a UTA open house for the Airport TRAX Line. It will start at 5:30p.m. and takes place at the State Fairpark. Free parking will be available inside the main gate on 1000 West at approx. 200 North.</p> <p>2. The same evening, the Downtown Community Council will devote its entire meeting to a Q&amp;A with the Church and developers of the City Creek Development. This is the redevelopment of the Crossroads and ZCMI blocks. Those interested are invited to attend. Their meeting begins at</p> | <p>6:00pm and will be located at the Greek Orthodox church at 300 West/300 South.</p> <p>3. We have been asked by the Planning Division to vote on the West Capitol Street Development in February. They are equally interested in our comments and concerns, so I (Polly Hart) will collect written comments from those in attendance AND from those who are unable to be present. If you cannot get to our meeting, please get your written comments to me (Polly) by Sunday, February 25th.</p> |
|---|--|