

SPRINGFIELD IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION & ARCHIVES PRESENTS THE
29th ANNUAL *Historic Springfield*
HOLIDAY HOME TOUR
2015

Friday, December 11 5-9 pm & Saturday, December 12* 5-9 pm

Tickets Buy your tickets online now or at select local businesses beginning November 1. Visit **SpringfieldTour.org** for more information.

Begin your tour at the SIAA building, where you may pick up a program containing a route map and details about each home.

Springfield Improvement Association & Archives
 210 W 7th St, Jax FL 32206
 904-633-9308
 mail@historicspringfield.org

a past to remember
a neighborhood to preserve
a future assured

*Interpreters for the Saturday tour are provided by UNF's ASL/English Interpreting Program. Contact interpretingdegree@unf.edu for more information.

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Springfield Sampler October/November 2015



Re-living a wonderful memory
A very moving moment

October 11th 2015 at 2pm

The Jewish Center
Corner Stone Came Home
to Springfield



Rabbi Jonathan Lubliner



Mr. Bud Shorstein

The beautiful dedication speech made by Mr. Bud Shorstein

The building that was across the street was not initially intended to be a Synagogue. To understand this, we have to review a little history of the Jacksonville Jewish Community.

In November 1901, an Orthodox Jewish congregation, "the Hebrew Orthodox Congregation B'nai Israel", later shortened to Congregation B'nai Israel was formed in Jacksonville, Florida. In 1905, the congregation purchased 2 acres of land in Evergreen Cemetery to create a Jewish cemetery and a lot at the corner of Jefferson and Duval streets on which a synagogue building was completed and dedicated in 1909. The congregation grew and in 1926, it hired Rabbi Samuel Benjamin, a dynamic personality, American trained, and ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary. Rabbi Benjamin, unhappy with the status of the Jacksonville Jewish community, felt it critical for the community to build a Jewish community center, not part of either of the two congregations in existence at the time. The objective of the Jewish community center, to be chartered as the Jacksonville Jewish Center, was to create a spiritual home for the entire Jewish community which would be capable of keeping the Jewish people alive and creative in the Diaspora. Rabbi Benjamin thought he would have the support of both congregations and the other Jewish organizations then in existence.

The more affluent Reform Jewish community was not enthusiastic. Notwithstanding, a campaign proceeded and a site at the corner of third and Silver streets was purchased in 1926. The fundraising campaign fell well short of its goal. The vast majority of its contributors were from Congregation B'nai Israel. Not enough funds were raised to construct the envisioned recreational and athletic facilities. It became obvious that a merger between B'nai Israel and the Jacksonville Jewish Center was the solution and that the new building would contain a synagogue facility. The new Synagogue was completed in December 1927. My father, N. Herman Shorstein, was a charter member of the Jacksonville Jewish Center.

The congregation grew steadily over the next years. During WWII, we hosted service personnel from Camp Blanding and the Naval facilities in the area. In March 1945, the congregation's board of directors resolved "to continue the program established in 1926 to create a complete synagogue center catering to the religious, educational, cultural, social and recreational needs of the Jewish community". To fulfill those goals, the congregation commenced planning for a new activities building adjoining the building on third street. The new building, completed in April, 1951, housed offices, class rooms, meeting rooms and a multipurpose auditorium, that seated 1400 people for high holiday services or could be one of the better basketball courts in the city. We had truly become a synagogue center.

My brothers, Jack, Harry and I grew up in this building. I started Hebrew school here at age 5 ½, went to day camp and learned to swim in the old Springfield swimming pool, learned to play tennis at Fifth and Perry tennis courts. Played hooky from services, crossed the street and climbed the cannon or gazebo. Brother Jack's sons, Mark, Michael and Neal started kindergarten and grammar school here. Mark's Hebrew High School classes often were held here in this park, weather permitting. We were all bar mitzvah here. Jack was president of the congregation when we initiated the fundraising campaign to move to Mandarin. I was co-chairman of that initial campaign and later became chairman of the board of the Jacksonville Jewish Center. Mark and Michael are past presidents of the congregation. The buildings that were across the street were central to the lives of our family and the friends we hold dearest.

We are forever grateful to Burkhalter Wrecking, Inc. and the Springfield Improvement Association and Archives for mounting and placing the cornerstone from the building completed in 1927. The cornerstone shall be a reminder to the Springfield and Jewish community of Jacksonville that sacred space once existed across the street.

Mary Dillon Fountain Dedication “Roots and Wings” SRG Homes & Neighborhoods.

Mack Bisette speaking;

Today, we are gathered in Klutho Park to rededicate this magnificent fountain, a beautiful and significant piece of our neighborhood’s history. I would like to take this opportunity to honor everyone who got hooked on Historic Springfield - in the early 1900s, at the turn-of-the-century, then again in the 1970s, 80s and 90s, and again today in the 21st century. As we gather for this rededication, we should also celebrate the passion and vision that is so evident among Historic Springfield’s residents.

In November of 1999, I visited Historic Springfield for the first time and could not believe what I was seeing. As I drove back to Atlanta, I realized I had just witnessed the most under-utilized as well as the most architecturally significant neighborhood I had ever seen.

I began to wonder, “What if?” What if other people saw what I saw? What if the city government also recognized this? What if the neighborhood had enough social assets to change the perceptions of the recent past and achieve the visions of its earlier glory?

Needless to say, I was hooked on Springfield. Over the past five years, I have discovered that hundreds of people also recognize what I witnessed in Springfield. This group includes neighborhood residents as well as several former and current city planners, city department leaders and Jacksonville’s mayors. I also discovered the social assets in the neighborhood are endless.

What I did not know in 1999, however, is the depth of the passion and commitment by so many individuals to restore and revitalize this neighborhood while bolstering its already exceptional quality of life. The restored Mary Dillon Fountain symbolizes creativity, a quest for outstanding quality of life and a bond to the past as well as to the future.

However, this fountain represents more than Historic Springfield’s past, it also captures the essence of the neighborhood’s pioneering spirit and vision. It announces to all that Springfield is a neighborhood with a strong sense of community. This is a neighborhood of homes, not just houses. It is not a housing development, but rather an irreplaceable collection of people that celebrate the past as well as welcome new ideas for the future.

The Historic Springfield story is about beginnings without endings. It began in the waning decade of the 19th Century and continues today, over a hundred years later, to be written even more expansively in the lives of our children. There are two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One is roots, the other is wings.

Take a moment and study this magnificent fountain and see if you can find those roots and wings.

SRG Homes is proud to have played a small part of this magnificent gift and symbol to the City of Jacksonville and, most importantly, to the people - past, current and future - who know Historic Springfield is too unique to fade away.

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Cornerstone of Memories - continued from Page 1. Florida Times Union October 12th 2015 Derek Gilliam Members of Jacksonville Jewish Center honor its history with a dedication

Before the Jacksonville Jewish Center moved from its initial home in Springfield 40 years ago, hundreds of its members made life-long friendships, learned more about the faith and even met their spouses inside its walls.

So it was those memories on their minds, that some longtime members gathered Sunday in Klutho Park to dedicate a monument made from the original cornerstone.

The cornerstone was salvaged from the original building, erected in 1927, that was destroyed by a fire on April 25, 2011. Josef Molenda lives on West Third Street at Silver Street across from where the building once stood. Molenda said by the time the fire department arrived the flames were already through the roof.

Margo Pilton Ruby stood proudly at the dedication ceremony. Her great-great grandfather, Elias H. Pilton helped build the original building and was the Jacksonville Jewish Center’s President for 20 years. She said she’s happy the stone has been saved and hopes it will stand for years to come.

Like many at the ceremony the stone represented memories and good times. Stanley Ruby said he met his wife Margo at the center 61 years ago. “I was young and handsome and my wife still thinks I’m handsome,” the 84-year-old said. They married 58 years ago.

Leonard Saraga, 84, sat next to Stanley Ruby. He talked about Boy Scouts meetings at the center and friends who are no longer around. “You look back at it and you realize how much water has gone over the bridge,” he said.

In his speech, Bud Shorstein 78, remembered going to Hebrew school during world War II. He met friends he still talks to at least once a week.

He remembers when Klutho Park still had cannons and how he and his friends would skip out on services to climb on the guns

“As much as anything else, I’m thinking about what place this building and the congregation played in our families lives,” he said.

Rabbi Jonathan Lubliner remembered visiting the center as a child. He said the building shaped his life because it laid the foundation for the congregation that he returned as an adult to lead on San Jose Boulevard. “Values and outlooks were changed by what happened in its walls,” he said. “Those values were transportable. They may have been created at Third and Silver, but they went where their lives took them.”

Restoration of Mary Dillon Fountain in 2006, see Mack Bisette speech, previous page



Photo of the fountain in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. Adrian Pillars used this as his model. The Putto was sculpted for the Medici family



The fountain in the 1980s with Putto removed

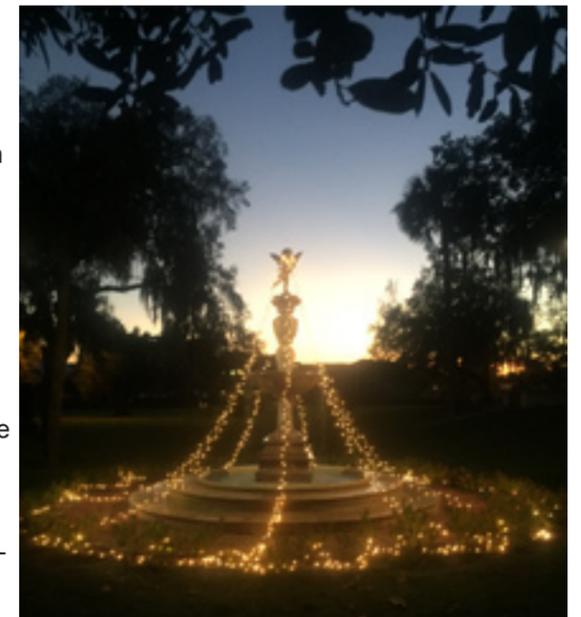


Lovely drawing done by Annette Neukirch. She drew the Putto and other pieces in place, to enable us to see the “finished” fountain



In 2003, this association realizing that we were approaching our 100th birthday in May of 2004, decided that we wished to restore the beautiful fountain that was placed in Klutho (then Springfield) Park in 1910. This in memory of our founder Mary Dillon. Naively we thought, that it would be ready for the birthday, little did we know that we faced a 3 year journey. We knew so little, all we had was the broken remains that are shown in the photo at the left. So we started our journey. First we researched C. Adrian Pillars. Fortunately we were able to get in touch with Pillars’ daughter. She allowed us access to his papers and there we found a newspaper report of the original dedication and a photo of how the fountain was originally. The photo, left, of the broken fountain with the paint on the marble was taken in 2004, (see a COA), it took a year to get to this point.

The photographs herein help us tell the story. The fountain, when erected in 1910, cost the association \$872. There were functional problems in the early years and it eventually was no longer working. The charming putto was removed so that it would not be stolen for its metal value in WW II and spent many years in a shed. The monument was pretty intact until the 80s, but was toppled by hooligans. The bowl was broken as it hit the concrete rims. It was thrown away. Two other parts disappeared namely the lion’s head and the support immediately under the bowl. Thankfully the 2 other pieces found their way onto our premises. We got permission to restore, under the condition that we maintained it for at least 2 years, Michael is still doing that job. Then we got the cost estimate! We had sold 6 parcels of land that had been donated to us over the years, we had \$85,000. We were facing an estimate of over \$100,000, but decided we were going to do it even it broke us. SRG Homes gave us \$10,000 and Shands, \$3,000. We sold bricks and were able to use interest from some matching funds we had. The marble for replacement pieces alone cost us \$25,000. Finally we had a glorious dedication in 2006, after spending \$135,000. We achieved our goal.



There are so many incredible stories of people associated with the fountain. Mary Dillon’s 3 year old grandson George (Georgie) Dillon helped his cousin with the unveiling. He became a Pulitzer prize winner for his poetry. He was the paramore of Edna St. Vincent Millay. There is so much more history attached to this fountain and the people involved over the years it will take another whole Sampler - maybe we will do it. Michael is maintaining this fountain with much love, see photo at right as it is this holiday season. We have again restored the fountain this year at a further cost of \$8,500. **We ask, please do not let children or anyone wade or swim in the fountain it is fragile!!**