MERIDIAN STREET FOUNDATION

NEWSLETTER

www.meridianstreetfoundation.org

2006 — The Year of Our Neighborhoods

WINTER 2006

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Kathryn Shorter, President | 931-1935

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Happy 2006 to all! I would like to add a special welcome to our *many* new residents. We hope you will be happy here, and we urge you to become an active part of our neighborhood.

The past year has been one of many positive happenings for the North Meridian Street historic district. At our annual meeting in October, many of the neighborhood highlights for '05 were reviewed: 1)30% growth in MSF membership, 2)completion of the 3-year River of Flowers planting project and continuation of the holiday décor, 3)improved website and continued excellent newsletter, 4)off duty officers enforcing traffic speed, 5)assembly and distribution of MSF Homeowner's manual to 750 historic area households, 6)design development and momentum for the Alice Carter Park Gateway project, 7)Governor's Residence complete renovation, 8)excellent social events to help us know our neighbors, 9)cooperative efforts with HUNI, Historic Landmarks, MKNA, and BTNA, and other organizations with common causes to ours, 10)the conclusion of the 4821 N. Meridian issue.

In addition, we are extremely pleased with the completion of a major phase of the Maple Road project and are supportive of its extension. We are thrilled with the new opening of IPS School #43 on Capitol. And we congratulate MKNA on the publication of the beautiful new book, *The History and Architecture of Meridian-Kessler*.

Now, on to a new year!!! MSF volunteer committees are committing to some large tasks in 2006. Here are some of the goals for '06 and beyond:

- Indianapolis Economic Development/A Walking-Friendly Historic Neighborhood—We hope to "package" and promote historic neighborhood walking tours on and near North Meridian, highlighting the history and architecture of our corridor. This vision includes sidewalk replacement and a bronze plaque to be placed in the sidewalk in front of each historic home/location. It is important to recognize that the North Meridian corridor is one of the most visible in Indianapolis and it is a significant part of the impression that is made on most visitors to our city. We want to work with our city government officials to improve the sidewalks and to calm the traffic.

- Alice Carter Park Gateway—The committee (along with much help from Indy Parks) will be working to finalize its design criteria. A major fundraising effort will be a requirement of further steps. The successful completion of this will mean an attractive entrance to our neighborhood from the north, the slowing of traffic entering the neighborhood, a beautiful neighborhood asset, and an opportunity to enhance awareness and education about historic preservation and architecture.

- Working Smarter as a Neighborhood—MSF is taking seriously the challenge to better organize our neighborhood, especially in the area of communicating and responding to issues such as safety, traffic, etc. The MSF website team is going to organize us for better email and e-bulletin board communications, allowing us to complain effectively and clearly when issues arise. Please do your part by checking the website meridianstreetfoundation.org often and by reading the newsletter when it arrives. Stay in touch with MSF!

- Knowing our Neighbors—This is especially important in a world that requires cooperative attention to safety. It's also fun and gratifying! Take the initiative — if you've been meaning to have a block party or neighborhood coffee, just do it! At a minimum, make sure you know the people on each side of you, across the street from you, and behind you. And please participate when we have MSF events. Check the calendar for 2006 tentative dates.

- Beautification—We now have flowers and Christmas bows, but some great new ideas are floating around regarding "lawn of the month" or seasonal décor competitions. Thanks to all of you who have supported the lamp post decoration with your contributions!

- Welcome Packets for newcomers—It is critical that new residents get the information they need about living in a neighborhood with historic preservation requirements. Help get neighbors off to a positive start by volunteering to make visits to new families. And please contact Elaine Klein to let her know when new people move in. If you are a new resident and would like to get involved on a committee, call me!

- Get Involved! We need you! There is much to be done, and we are all volunteers. Please let us know of your interest. We need help with welcome packets, newsletter articles, computer skills, organizing events, beautification, organizing people, you name it! At a minimum, please give us your ideas. A neighborhood like ours cannot be taken for granted. Be a part of things!

Final Reflection on 2005: I feel very lucky to be a part of such a supportive neighborhood. Never has this support been demonstrated more than in the saga of 4821 N. Meridian as we witnessed a neighbor's struggle (over many years) with outrageous vandalism, harassment, and intimidation. It was gratifying to see so many neighbors step forward to support Alice and David Berger, who asked only that Meridian Street Preservation law be upheld and that due process be followed. Alice and David, I personally thank you for caring so much about our neighbors and neighborhood. No one will ever take the historic preservation of our neighborhood for granted again.

Many times over the past several years it would have been much easier for the Bergers to pack up and move, to simply abandon our neighborhood. Instead, they hung in there, patiently following the law and remaining civil in the face of many attacks. Thanks to Alice and David for their tenacity, for caring enough to educate commissioners and improve the Meridian Street Preservation Commission process, and to insist that neighbors understand and appreciate the Historic Preservation laws.

Here's to an outstanding 2006!

MERIDIAN STREET FOUNDATION

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A STRING OF PEARLS

BY PEGGY SABENS, EDITOR

We appreciate Ruth Holliday's article reprinted in this newsletter detailing the saga of 4821 N. Meridian Street, known as the "Boczar House". Many of us were involved in this nearly eight year battle to uphold the law in the face of very serious odds. Unfortunately the illegal and inappropriate changes to this property made its rehabilitation impossible and the Meridian Street Preservation Commission gave permission in November, 2005, to the new owners, David and Alice Berger, to remove the structure. No one is happy about this result but at least the Meridian Street Preservation law was eventually upheld.

When I learned of this development, I was reminded of my student days in the 50's (giving away my age) when every girl had a cashmere sweater and a string of pearls. Glenn Miller recorded "A String of Pearls". Just as with a string of pearls, each bead or home is important and intricately woven into the fabric of our beautiful neighborhood.. We regret the loss of this "bead" and hope that the lessons learned from this nearly eight-year experience will prevent such occurrences in the future. Ruth Holliday's column reprinted in this newsletter details how close our neighborhood came to allowing inroads into our Meridian Street Preservation Commission laws which would have spelled the end to our exquisitely entwined string of pearls.

We will not dwell on the past except to say that those of us involved in the almost daily fight to follow the law, when others used the law as a weapon rather than a tool, tried to let others know that giving in or taking the easy way out was not the answer. Standing up to the abuse and vindictive actions and threats was the only way to resolve this attack on our community. We did learn a lot of things—we must stand up and be counted; each bead is important to the total experience of living in such a unique place; officials are human and have the same fears we all do; the law is painfully slow to act but when public officials and the broadcast and print media realize that we mean business, they participate. We also learned, with hard work, we could convince the MSPC and the Zoning board how important it is to enforce the law that preserves this historic community.

When things got quite bleak and another roadblock was thrown up against our best efforts; when it seemed people just didn't care any more; so many times during this ordeal I quoted the words of Harvey Cox, a modern day theologian who said "Goodness is its own reward." So I will close with a rather mundane statement: All's well that ends well. 'Nuf said.

FIRST LADY'S COFFEE

Cheri Daniels, Nelda Coxey and Lorene Burkhart at First Lady's Coffee at the Shorters in November.

Monica Frost, MKNA, at the First Lady's Coffee.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

This is our membership "drive" newsletter. An envelope is included for your tax deductible Meridian Street Foundation (MSF) membership dues. Your dues are extremely important to the efforts of MSF. Without your help this informative newsletter would not be possible. Without your generosity we could not have created and delivered 700 "North Meridian Street Historic District" homeowner's guides. Without your dues we would not be able to support and protect this historic district for future generations.
Thank you and remember every year in the historic district adds another layer to the rich history of this great neighborhood.

Your membership committee:
Alice Berger
Rosie Sweeney
Virginia Handley
Rome Nkosi

BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

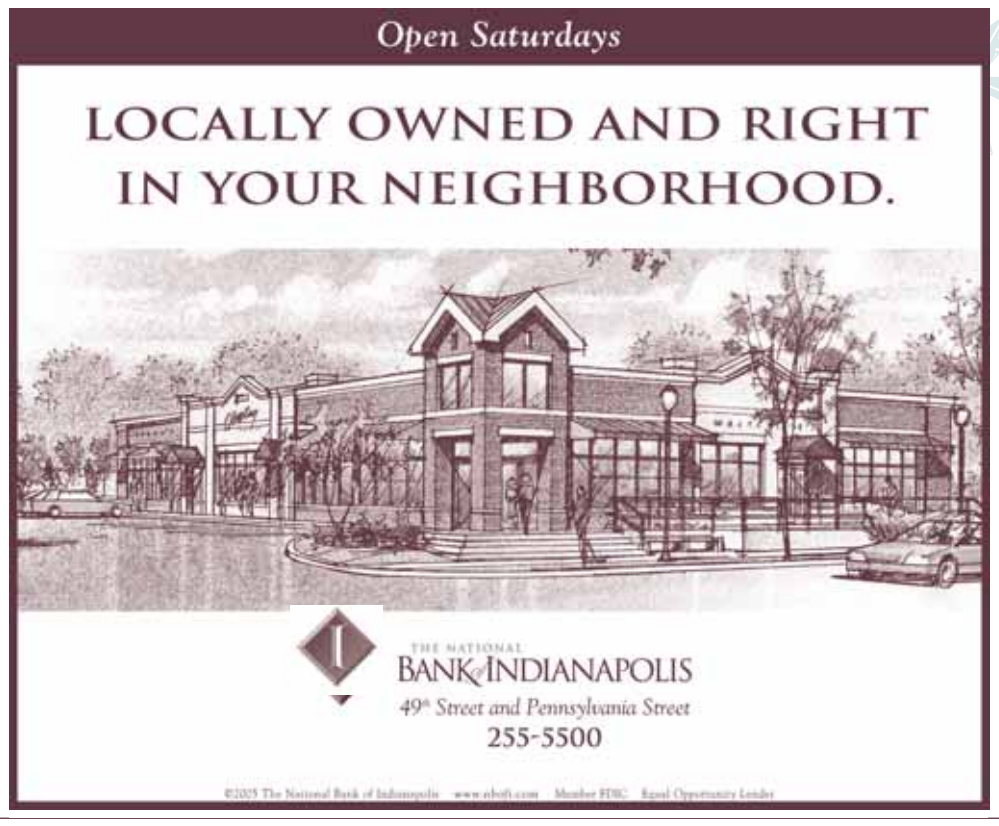
ALICE BERGER | 283-2453

Hope all of you enjoyed the holiday greenery and red bows on the lamp posts along historic Meridian Street. We couldn't have done it without you! Thank you for your generous donations and remember the money you send in now will help insure we continue this tradition next year.

It looks so simple but it takes a lot of work to decorate our long, long street. A special thanks to Virginia Handley for ironing bows, David Berger and Vic Stewart for stuffing and stamping donation envelopes and Kathy Shorter and Melissa Oesterle for keeping me on track and on time. Also a "thank you" to Especially Gardens for working in the freezing cold in order to make Meridian Street so festive.

Now on to Spring!! Don't forget when the Glory of the Snow flowers are in bloom in early April you mustn't mow or you won't have any flowers. Also, please refrain from putting advertising signs in your yard, it's unattractive and takes away from our "River of Flowers." If you want more Glory of the Snow bulbs just let me know and I'll be happy to order them for you.

Have a Happy New Year and a beautiful spring.



LIVING IN HISTORY IS WORTH CELEBRATING

The MSF Social Committee is dreaming about and organizing events that will appeal to and increase interaction among all Meridian Street Foundation area residents. Expect repeats of popular past events (like the annual Easter Egg Hunt announced in this newsletter). And look forward to new activities that celebrate our uniqueness and diversity.

The committee's main goals are:

- increase participation in MSF social activities.
- increase focus and inclusion of residents and residences on Illinois Street, Pennsylvania Street, and the connecting east-west streets.
- strengthen our community by having fun.

Our new chairpersons, Laura Daly and Karen Glickert, are working closely with our preceding (and fabulous) chairperson, Ann Rich. As they plan the 2006 social calendar, they are hoping for suggestions and support from many MSF residents. If you have ideas, enthusiasm, suggestions, a little spare time, wads of cash, a sense of fun, and/or a secret desire to be Martha Stewart, the MSF Social Committee wants you!

Call or email Laura (985-5570 / laura@pierredaly.com) or Karen (926-6318 / glickrench@yahoo.com).

MY HOUSE HISTORY

BY YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD YENTA B, (JOSEPHINE BANKS)

When I first moved to Indianapolis, I knew very little about the city. In fact I think the only things I really knew about it were: that it was where the Indianapolis Five Hundred is held and it was where the story of the Magnificent Ambersons was set. I can't say I was too interested in the car racing but I was certainly interested in the setting of that great book. It held so much history and color of the region and the country as a whole — so much so that Orson Wells had thought to turn it into a movie. Anyway, those two items were my only real knowledge of Indianapolis and I must admit that watching cars racing around in circles didn't interest me (sorry race fans) but houses and the people who live in them do.

Well, I was coming to live in Indianapolis after who knows how many years in New York City and a childhood and adolescence in London!!! As you might tell, it was an unsettling move for someone who had lived in big cities all her life. The Ambersons' story gave me heart — a fascinating family and an equally fascinating house. Did it really exist? I've always thought that houses had special personalities of their own and that the families that lived behind their walls gave them part of that personality.

Growing up in Hampstead, a London neighborhood filled with history, a little off-kilter and inhabited by interesting people of every mix possible was my milieu as a child. My neighbors' family were Spanish refugees who'd left because of Franco, and told the most outrageous stories and held to equally radical political theories. Another neighbor was a writer for the London Times who had originally come from Australia, spent years in Africa, and now wrote on the plight of Africa after colonialism. Another was a Jewish family whose ancestors had left Spain during the inquisition, having refused to relinquish their faith and were as proud of this fact as one could be (despite the fact that their son loved to shoot BB's at pigeons and got cited for injuring the Queen's property — yes pigeons in England at that time belonged to the Queen — and later went on to become a literary critic and the author on one of the greatest books on suicide ever written).

In New York I lived in an apartment building by far more over the top than Seinfeld could ever imagine. The owner hated the building so much that she reportedly had a curse put on it because she blamed the tenants for killing her husband by causing him so much anguish over their complaints. The superintendent used to find ladies of the night and take them into the service elevator, which he stopped between floors to get his pleasure while his wife ran up and down the stairs chasing the elevator and screaming at him. There was an African American singer who had performed with Billy Holliday and was almost as famous in her day as that icon who held the most d'beautililly (her term) parties for the cream of black society — Jackie Kennedy even attended one. The apartment next to ours was occupied by a monogamous gay couple plus a single gay man who I "dated" once at a dinner at the New York Yacht Club so that he could get the approval of his bosses and get a two year stint in a job in Buenos Aires (he liked Spanish boys).

Could I find any neighborhood or home that had this kind of interesting ambience?For me the answer was no.

I found a realtor and searched. Geist? No. Downtown? No. (It hadn't been redeveloped at that time.) Carmel? No. Williams Creek? No. All lovely places but not suited to my requirements. The houses and area didn't have enough history for me. I couldn't see the possibility of the quirkiness I was seeking. It had to be a place with sidewalks. It had to have some sense of habitation other than cars. People needed to be walking around. And the hope of various personalities and differentiation of ethnicity and religion was a necessity. Finally, it came down to Meridian Kessler/Butler Tarkington, something close to civilization, culture, whatever. And of primary importance was a house with a personality. As I said before I do believe that houses have personality and their past and present residents make a mark. I walked around the area with a special interest in Meridian Street with its designation as a National Historic Landmark. I looked at the windows, the eyes of the house as Henry James called them, and wondered what past secrets lay behind those unblinking apertures. Who had built them? Who had lived in them? What did they do? Where did they go? I heard speculation that one of the houses had an underground passage that led from the garage to the house because he was a judge during prohibition and was afraid of assassination for revenge. True? I don't know but a great story. I'd love to know more. Then there was the old governor's mansion that didn't have enough bathrooms. True? Who knows? I won't go into some of the little secret gossip about houses right now. Maybe later.

Then I speculated on the changes that had happened to the houses through the years. Houses change with the people in them, with the times, with aspirations — nothing is static. Like nature and time nothing remains constant. But History demands its remembrance, its constancy. The balance is delicate. Does the outside remain the same and all else change? Who knows?

So many houses I went to visit. None speaking to me when I came through the door. But then came one I loved — not the one I'm in now. That's a different story. I bought it. Not without a fight because the sellers also had a personality, a difficult personality. But there was something I could feel in the house. What, I didn't know, but it was definitely in there. You could feel it in the walls. I closed on the house and moved in. And lo and behold with the deed came papers!!!

I searched through them and what a treat. It was a history of the house laid out in divorce papers of the builder and first owner. What a history — what fun to read. So people in Indianapolis did indulge in idiosyncratic behavior, did have foibles, did misbehave.

(Continued on Page 9)

Please help keep our neighborhood beautiful!

Lawn signs that advertise services are strongly discouraged.

Your neighbors will appreciate it if you do not allow contractors to put up lawn signs.

Thank you!

DID YOU KNOW?

ALICE BERGER, COMMISSIONER, MSPC

As a Meridian Street Historic District homeowner, you have many reasons to be proud of your home. Nearly 70% of the homes along Meridian Street were built in the 1920's and 1930's, with the oldest home being built in 1908 and the newest in 1966.* These homes were designed and built for upper middle class families who wanted gracious and elegant living, modern conveniences, and superior craftsmanship. Thick plaster walls, extensive use of leaded and stained glass, slate, marble, elaborate tile, original lighting and bathroom fixtures contribute much to the value and ambiance of your Meridian Street area home. When you purchase a home in the Historic District, you are buying these extraordinary details. Please preserve these detail features just as carefully as you would preserve your wood paneled library. Though remodeling and upgrading are often desirable or necessary the most successful changes balance the old and the new. Before making any changes to the exterior of your house or property you must apply for a "Certificate of Appropriateness" from the Meridian Street Preservation Commission (MSPC). *4165 new house built in 1995

All homes in the historic district are governed by the "Meridian Street Statute — 36-7-11.2" passed in 1971. The following is section 59 of that law:

A new structure may not be erected upon a parcel of Meridian Street property or an existing structure upon the property may not be altered if the structure would do any of the following:

1. Permit a residential usage that, in relation to the parcel upon which situated, would be a substantially greater density than the average residential density of Meridian Street property lying within one thousand (1,000) feet of the property in question, excluding for purposes of determining the average Meridian Street property used for multiple family residential or commercial purposes.
2. Appear substantially smaller or larger in size and scale than the average size and scale of the single and double family residential dwellings situated upon Meridian Street property lying within one thousand (1,000) feet of the property in question.
3. Have a set-back from Meridian Street significantly less than the average set-back of structures facing upon Meridian Street that are situated upon Meridian Street property lying within one thousand (1,000) feet of the property in question.
4. Have side lots measuring less than fifteen (15) feet from the property line of the subject property to the wall of the structure erected or altered.
5. If primarily a residential dwelling, have a ground floor area of less than two thousand (2,000) square feet or 40% of the total area of the parcel of land upon which the dwelling lies, whichever is less.
6. Including all other structures upon the parcel, have a total ground floor area greater than 50% of the total area of the parcel of land upon which the structure lies.
7. Substantially encroach upon the view and exposure of a residential structure on a neighboring property.

Sheila Little, Chair of Public Safety Committee, presents Officer Ben Hunter with MSF Certificate of Appreciation.

COMMITTEE REPORT: MSF WEBSITE

In a desire to improve and expand upon our current community website www.meridianstreetfoundation.org, the MSF Website committee will seek input from MSF members and outside peers in order to devise a master plan for an effective re-design of this internet portal. Once a design is approved, construction phases with a plan for maintenance and ongoing upkeep will follow.

The current website is functioning and will be maintained and updated as needed until such a time when the new site can be posted (without change to your current bookmarks). Now is a good time to let the committee know about your ideas. How can this website better serve you, our association and the goals of the foundation? New committee volunteers are welcomed. You do not have to possess any special knowledge or experience to help with this important project.

Current committee members:
David Stahl, chair
Steve Vickery
Elaine Klein

TURNING THE CORNER

BY MELISSA DAUM, EDITED BY DAN DAUM

"We'll just take down a few trees and clean up the brush and weeds, it'll be fun," I said to my husband when I talked him into tackling the job of taming the property at 5363. As usual, I underestimated the project.

The woods at the corner of 54th and Meridian was a habitat for all things native which included lots of invasive weeds that choke out just about any desirable plant. The creatures loved it and according to neighbors so did a few homeless folks who found the thicket a great place to occasionally camp out. The woods, graced with several standpipes, had a constant supply of water and enough honeysuckle to camouflage their presence.

It took a lot of work to clear out the natives and replant with more desirable trees. We were hoping to be able to keep more of the woods but learned it would be very difficult for evergreens to survive with that much shade, plus many of trees weren't worth saving; mostly volunteer wild cherry and elm trees. But as any gardener knows, the loss of tree is an opportunity for planting a new one and we will be adding more this spring.

Thanks to the creative and artistic work of landscapers Dick Gale and his partner Jim Rabb, we now have a good start on an elegant but simple plan for creating a peaceful space for outdoor living and for playing with our grandchildren. Adding permanent walkways around the house and through the woods with several appropriately sized patios in strategic locations was the first step in making the space functional for our family. We can now walk the lovely paths around the house and property to check out what's blooming without getting our feet muddy. Dick also suggested moving the front steps far enough west to make the main entrance visible to visitors. We love the idea and think the new steps are a beautiful improvement.

We've lined the hilltop with Norway spruce trees making a wonderful screen for the traffic plus a beautiful backdrop for the woodland garden nestled on the other side. This fall we added an assortment of flowering trees and shrubs to the woods and we look forward to spring when they bloom with the existing multitude of bulbs. The woods is filled with native toad lilies, may apples, and jack-in-the-pulpits, plus a variety of cultured bulbs that have been multiplying for years, all providing a wonderful carpet for the blooming trees.

The steep hillsides that edge the property were a maintenance problem for the former owner as well as for us. Constantly overgrown, they impeded the view of drivers at the intersection and it appears to several of us on the corner that we hear the sirens less often since the hillside has been graded and planted with grass. We hope that it has helped improve visibility. An unintended bonus!

We are often in the yard whenever the weather is reasonable and welcome our neighbors to come by and check out the garden. It's a wonderful space and we feel very fortunate to be its caretakers.

Neighbor Spotlight

David Stahl

David and his wife Julie O'Brien have owned their Meridian Street home for 4 years. They have been residents of Meridian-Kessler for over 20 years. David has two sons, Duane, 33, and Zach, 30 as well as daughter, Rachel O'Brien Hunter, 20, who is attending Columbia College in Chicago.

David is president of Stahl Partners Inc, a firm offering commercial strategic branding services that assist organizations to focus, define, differentiate and communicate their value to customers. He is a frequent speaker and his work has been published numerous times and has won dozens of local, regional and national awards.

Serving as president of the Indianapolis Chapter of the AIGA (American Institute of Graphic Arts) and as vice-president and founding member the Herron-Morton Place Historic District are just a few of the ways David has nurtured his interest in community involvement. In 2006 David will be a presenter in a series of workshops for the non-profit, Neighborhood Self-Employment Initiative (NSI).

HALLOWEEN IN THE LAND OF OZ

Dorothy aka First Lady Cheri Daniels greets little clown Kate Sabens at the Governor's Residence Halloween Land of Oz.

NEW RESIDENT HOSTS COFFEE FOR "OLD" RESIDENTS

Attending were Jody McLane, Bertie Lamberson, Marsha Landon, Kathy Shorter, Nelda Coxey, Marilyn Strawbridge, Virginia Handley, Ethel Madden, Elaine Klein, Alice Berger, and the hostess, Lorene Burkhart.

Photographer was Linda Evans, a Tarkington Tower resident.

GARDEN SET TO REPLACE RUNDOWN RANCH

RUTH HOLLADAY | INDIANAPOLIS STAR

Alice Berger is graciously giving a tour of her newly purchased house in the prestigious block of 4800 N. Meridian St. The place is a fright. Beat-up furniture is outside on a concrete slab. The kitchen is littered with nearly empty gallon bottles of vodka and tequila, and the bathroom windows are filthy. The once-upon-a-time limestone ranch is half under construction inside and out, haplessly caught with no visible architectural identity.

But no matter. Assuming the Meridian Street Preservation Commission approves, Berger and her husband, David, who paid more than $300,000 for the property in bankruptcy court and closed on it Oct. 3, will tear it all down, donating the lumber and other resources to a group that builds housing for the poor. And they will plant an enormous garden in its space. “I think of it as the garden of good and evil,” says Berger, 56, a diminutive blonde who is about as fragile as stainless steel.

That's one observation gleaned from the saga that has fascinated and repelled Indianapolis since 1998, when Dr. Linda Boczar and her lawyer husband, James Boczar (who died in 2002), began plans to renovate the ranch they bought next door to the Bergers' large brick Tudor.

No big deal. Meridian Street is lined with historic mansions. If the Boczars, from Florida, could improve their ranch, more power to them. All they had to do was get the OK from the Meridian Street Commission. They passed that hurdle, but then began a different rehab — one that was far less costly, and illegal.

When Berger and others objected, the city issued a stop-work order. The Boczars put a sign out in front, attacking then Mayor Stephen Goldsmith. That was only the start. Although some stories described the drama as a neighborhood feud, Alice Berger maintains it was never that. Instead, it is about following the rules, she said — which the Boczars refused to do. That was well documented in videotape showing the gynecologist vandalizing the Bergers' home in 1999.

Linda Boczar told the court her story: After a tiring day, she came home, drank some wine, got a hammer, went next door and smashed in three large windows at the Bergers while Alice Berger cowered inside. Not satisfied, and unaware that a camera was on, Boczar returned at dawn, spray-painting swastikas on the Bergers' home and the homes of neighbors.

After she was convicted of a felony, Boczar practiced medicine in northern Indiana. She eventually returned to Florida and filed for bankruptcy.

Berger will present her plans for the house and garden to the commission Nov. 15. In the meantime, she is pondering her revelations about good and evil, well aware that this is no Eden. A Meridian Street address does not make one above the law, she said. Nor does it guarantee protection from harm.

Ruth Holladay's column appears Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday. This article originally ran October 16, 2005. This article reprinted by kind permission of the Indianapolis Star. Copyright 2005 IndyStar.com. All rights reserved.
For further details, see “String of Pearls” on page 2.

AROUND THE BLOCK

Neighbor Greg Dedinsky was featured prominently in the October 12th edition of the Indianapolis Star, beneath the headline “For Ailing Hearts, a Chance To Recover.” A heart surgeon at St. Francis' Cardiac and Vascular Care Center, Dedinsky interviewed in conjunction with his use of a device that can temporarily take over the work of the heart, helping give the patient's own heart a chance to rest and recover following a heart attack.

Tony Smith is has temporarily relocated to Sao Paulo, Brazil, where he is working on a new venture for Ernst and Young's South American office. As part of the St. Richard's School French exchange program, the Cox family will be hosting the mayor of Courcouronnes, France. Brent and Gwen Harvey have welcomed a new baby, Madelyn, born on October 5.

This fall has brought several get-acquainted parties to the street. Lorene Burkhart recently returned to Tarkington Tower where she had resided from 1989 until 1996 with her late husband, John Burkhart. A friend, Nelda Coxey (5104 N. Meridian) had earlier hosted a “get acquainted” coffee for Lorene, so she reciprocated with a “See my Condo” coffee and its top of the tower views. Kathy Shorter and Melissa Oesterle hosted a coffee for Cheri Daniels, wife of Governor Mitch Daniels, where many neighbors gathered, eager the meet Indiana's first lady. The house was decorated beautifully for the Crossroads Guild Holiday Home Tour. Other neighborhood homes on the tour were the Oesterle's, the Bennett's, and the Knotts' home. All were resplendent with decorations and flowers from local florists.

Mark your calendars for two big events in the spring. The Meridian Street Foundation will be hosting the annual neighborhood Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 15; details to be forthcoming. St. Margaret's Guild has chosen the Governor's Residence for its 45th Annual Decorators Show House; with preview tours February 4, 5, 11 and 12; followed by the home tour April 29-May 14.

If Winter Comes,
Can Spring Be Far Behind?

The Meridian Street Foundation
invites you to the annual
Easter Egg Hunt at the
former Governor's Residence
4343 N. Meridian Street
Saturday, April 15, 2006
at 10:30 am.

For details call Laura at 985-5570
or Karen at 926-6318.

Bella Vista
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References Available

317.254.5611

John Sabens, *Owner*
info@bellavistalandscaping.com
www.bellavistalandscaping.com

GREETINGS FROM A LONG TIME FRIEND

MARSH DAVIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GALVESTON HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

Nearly half a lifetime ago I had the great pleasure of becoming acquainted with North Meridian Street. This was during the time when Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, where I was employed, was in the process of nominating North Meridian Street to the National Register of Historic Places, when the great "Meridian in Bloom" tours were in full swing, and when we were preparing the book *The Main Stem*.

Through the years my appreciation for "The Street" grew as did my fondness for the many residents there who became friends. So I was most pleased when Peggy Sabens invited me to write a few words for your newsletter—a most impressive achievement, by the way—with the suggested topic being Galveston, Texas, my home for nearly four years and recently in the news during this year's extraordinarily active hurricane season.

As a barrier island—basically a long, narrow sandbar off the coast of Texas, about fifty miles south of Houston—Galveston has a long and dramatic history of hurricanes which are a part of the fabric of life here. Most of the year, from April through November, is hurricane season and it's taken very seriously.

The most famous hurricane, and indeed a defining moment for Galveston, was The Great Storm of 1900, before human names were ascribed to storms. This storm remains the deadliest natural disaster in American history. While certainly not the most costly in terms of dollars (Katrina and Rita are miles ahead on that score), the toll on human lives was huge, with over six thousand confirmed deaths and many more unaccounted for.

The effects on Galveston were profound. Before the 1900 storm, Galveston was a thriving, wealthy city with a natural harbor and a port that was among the busiest in the nation. The city was formally established in 1839 and for a time during the nineteenth century enjoyed a status of Texas' largest city. In fact, Galveston was destined to become, by many predictions, the pre-eminent port city of the whole Gulf of Mexico. Its exuberant architecture and vibrant social life mirrored Galveston's status, just prior to 1900, as an American city second only to Providence, Rhode Island, in per capita wealth.

After the devastating storm of 1900, with one-third of the city in ruins and most of the rest of it damaged, the will to survive prevailed and—immediately and somewhat incredibly—the city leaders set about the task of rebuilding. The protection of the Island against future hurricanes, however, would require two major undertakings of civil engineering. First was the building of a seawall, some seventeen feet in height and now extended over ten miles along the Gulf of Mexico. The second was the grade raising during which most of the city was elevated—buildings and all. Until 1900, Galveston was extremely low and flat, rising at its highest point a mere nine feet above the sea. With the seawall and increased height came protection against storm surges and flooding. Both proved effective in major subsequent storms.

In spite of the heroic efforts to save the city and maintain its commercial vitality, time, technology, and the growth of that upstart town up the bay, Houston, signaled the end of Galveston's golden age. When Houston completed its ship channel and deepwater port in 1917, it quickly superceded Galveston as the regional port and center of commerce.

Today, Galveston still has an active port and one of the nation's busiest cruise ship terminals. But much of the Island's commerce has shifted to tourism, both recreational and heritage-based. Another major presence on the Island is the University of Texas Medical Branch which employs thousands and adds immeasurably to the intellectual and cultural life of the community.

I relocated to Galveston in 2002 to direct the Galveston Historical Foundation (GHF), one of the nation's largest and oldest historic preservation groups. GHF was founded in 1954 to preserve the city's amazing architectural heritage. We have some extraordinary collections of late-nineteenth century buildings and a terrific expanse of Gulf-Coast vernacular—all of which were shaped by the intensely warm climate and sea breezes. Sensational porches were among the inventions inspired by the need to capture any hint of moving air in the days before air-conditioning. Much of this great architectural legacy was in shambles by mid-20th century. GHF's role in reversing that situation has been profound.

Galveston Historical Foundation also maintains numerous historic properties including antebellum mansions and the Texas Seaport Museum, home to our historic (1877) sailing ship, ELISSA. I could write for days about GHF's programs and properties, but instead I invite you to check us out on line at www.galvestonhistory.org

The recent hurricane season reawakened us to our vulnerability. While we were spared the devastation that our coastal neighbors to the east experienced, the lessons have not been lost, and Galveston, each year, intensifies its hurricane preparedness programs. During Rita, the Island was evacuated—the first time in many years. The evacuation itself was historic as a harrowing experience for countless thousands, including my family. (We were stuck in a 27 hour traffic jam on what should have been a four-hour drive to Austin.) We returned to find Galveston largely spared, although a bit messy. Some of GHF's historic sites received damage, but nothing terribly serious. Our perspective on what's important was adjusted, and our thankfulness in finding our historic city intact, profound.

I invite all of you to visit Galveston. It's a dynamic and historically rich community—and generally about thirty degrees warmer than Indianapolis this time of year.

With all best wishes,
Marsh Davis marsh.davis@galvestonhistory.org

EDITOR'S NOTE

Meridian Street Foundation News & Views published three times a year is the communication arm of the Meridian Street Foundation, a 501C3 not for profit neighborhood association. We welcome comments and ideas from our neighbors. Our main thrust is to reinforce the idea that while a certain degree of discipline and commitment is necessary to live in a unique and significant neighborhood, the rewards far outweigh any disadvantages.
Peggy Sabens ph. 257-3741,
fax 475-0224, email jmsabens@indy.net
John Peoni, Raul Burciaga, Phil Cox
Kathy Shorter, Vaughn Hickman
Karen Glickert, Ted Planje, David Stahl

We will gladly accept letters or comments for inclusion in upcoming issues.

ALICE IN MERIDIANLAND

A few years ago Peggy Sabens, our editor, came up with the title of “Alice in Meridianland” for me to write about our street in the News & Views. It was perfect! Especially ever since 1999, when Linda Boczar attacked my home with a hammer, I felt like I had just walked through the “looking glass.”

Therefore, I would like to use this column to say thank you to all of you who stood by David and me and who bravely supported our historic district.

Thank you for your letters to the editor, Mayor and judges.

Thank you for continuing to visit my home even when Jim Boczar took pictures of your license plate to intimidate you. Thank you for the hours you spent in court and at the MSPC hearings. Thank you for helping me look-out for my daughter who could not move back home, that summer after her first year in college, because of our fear that harm would come to her. Thank you for being good friends, good neighbors and people of integrity. David and I will never forget you and feel honored to know you.

Alice — in Meridianland

LAND USE

2005 has been a busy year for our neighbors seeking a COA-Certificate of Appropriateness or prior approval for variance from the Meridian Street Preserveration Commission. We often get inquiries as to what needs approval. The best rule of thumb is :

1) If you live on Meridian Street (primary district) and need to make any changes to the outside of your property then you need to request a COA and go before the Meridian Street Preservation Commission (MSPC).

2) If you live in the secondary district (East side of Illinois, West side of Pennsylvania or any of the streets off Meridian between 40th and the canal) and you need a variance for proximity to the property line (less than 7 ft.) or want to build a garage over 20 feet in height, you would need to seek a request for approval for a variance. More details are available at meridianstreetfoundation.org

If you are not sure what you need to do you can call your Land Use chair person — Cindy Zweber-Free — 921-9571 to discuss. The Land Use committee also meets the 1st Friday of every month to discuss upcoming hearings of the MSPC.

Below is a list of the approvals for 2005.
COAs & Variances granted by MSPC in 2005:

21 Meridian Lane (prior approval for a variance for porte-cochere, garage, office, and open space requirements)

4045 N Meridian (COA for garage repair and improvements)

4155 N Meridian (COA for roof work, deck, and other improvements)

4245 N Meridian (COA for fence, removal of pool, removal of trees, and other improvements)

4300 N Meridian (COA for banner — home tour)

4350 N Meridian (COA for fence)

4366 N Meridian (COA for fence, gate, and removal of tree)

4404 N Meridian (COA kitchen addition)

4430 N Meridian (COA for fence)

4621 N Meridian (COA for pool, fence, and landscaping)

4750 N Meridian (COA for guardhouse, drive, awning and other improvements; second COA for gate, awning, sign, and paving; third COA for stone wall)

4821 N Meridian (COA for demolition)

4919 N Meridian (COA for replacement of windows and door)

4925 N Meridian (COA for driveway replacement)

5363 N Meridian (COA for patio and other improvements)

5425 N Meridian (COA for arbor and walks)

5501 N Meridian (COA for pool, patio, and fence; second COA for removal of breezeway and construction of kitchen addition)

5617 N Meridian (prior approval of variance, COA for garage addition, pergola, patio, and removal of yard barn and tree)

5655 N Meridian (COA for front door improvements)

5723 N Meridian (COA for construction of porch)

5225 N Illinois (prior approval of variance for expansion of garage)

5710 N Pennsylvania (prior approval of variance for garage setback)

5300 N Meridian (COA for removal of shrubbery, new walk)

Oesterle Home on Crossroads Christmas Tour November; Park Tudor Orchestra on the porch.

Steve Campbell, Deputy Mayor, featured speaker at our annual MSF meeting.

FRESH THOUGHHTS

A sampling of the best comments of the week from the Editorial Board's college/high school blog.

No tours of strip malls

Hannah Werntz
Butler University

FLORENCE, Italy — Will there be tour groups flocking to Indiana, or even America, in 600 years? Will our culture be remembered in history books only for our technological advances?

It is nearly unimaginable that the strip malls and tract houses built these days will be on anyone's list of sights to see. The art, literature, architecture and music produced in the current era have a very slim chance of passing the test of time.

Walking through a city with beauty and history on every corner only highlights the fact that things at home are not built to last. Instead of appreciating and maintaining, we make things quickly and cheaply. Then we crumple them up, throw them away and replace them with more of the same.

Let us look to be remembered by the amazing creations that we surround ourselves with, not as a disposable and wasteful culture.

(Werntz is studying in Florence this semester.)

Reprinted by kind permission of the Indianapolis Star. This article originally ran September 23, 2005.

"Buildings must survive the ravages not only of time but also of fashion"

—Witold Rybczynski
The Most Beautiful House in the World.

Neighbor Spotlight

Melissa Osterle

Lived on the street for 6 years. Lived in Meridian Kessler for several years before moving away and coming back. Purdue graduate. Hoosier by nature. Worked for several years before retiring to full time motherhood. Mother of 4. Involved in everything from Neighborhood stuff to preschool volunteer day. Love historic restoration. Would prefer to be outdoors versus anything.

MY HOUSE HISTORY continued from page 3

Maybe I should start with the historical information contained in the first deed dated 1915. This had the history of Indiana from its original possession by the French followed by the British and finally the United States. Its admission to the Union as state in 1816 and the establishment of the city of Indianapolis in 1821 on land granted to the state of Indiana by the act of the Congress of the United States to the State of Indiana. Land other than that granted was sold by the United States to agents of the State of Indiana. In 1821 the land upon which the house was build was sold by the United States to R____ H_____ and later passed on to his heirs. All very interesting but all facts, no personal history — nothing to indicate the persons who had owned the land.

But then the next paragraph were terms of the transfer of the property because of a divorce filed in 1885. Wow!!! My interest peeked — a divorce in 1885. How uncommon. I looked around my new house with more interest than ever. The feeling of history I had felt before was confirmed. Was there a copy of the divorce papers? Yes, indeed there was and oh what a treasure of gossip. I'll quote for you.

"That the defendant disregarding his duties as a husband, towards the plaintiff has been guilty of habitual drunkenness for more than two years last past.

That the defendant for more than two years last past has failed to make reasonable provision of the plaintiff.

That since said marriage the defendant has treated her in a cruel and inhuman manner in particular as follows, heretofore to-wit, on the 20th day of June 1885…..said defendant cursed the defendant and threatened to kill the plaintiff. And said defendant uniformly and constantly whenever he comes into the plaintiff's presence when intoxicated curses plaintiff, applied to her most vulgar and abusive terms. That at various times the exact date plaintiff cannot give, the defendant has brought to the home where plaintiff and defendant resided, women of low character, and kept them there and consorted with them. That for the last five years defendant has been habitually associated with prostitutes and in the most cruel and most offensive terms in the habit of narrating to plaintiff his experiences with such characters."

This was as good as any supermarket tabloid gossip. I could imagine women that looked like the victims in Jack the Ripper movies — my only visual experience of 19th Century prostitutes. (though I certainly hope these didn't meet the same fates). Drunken Mr. H_____ consorting with drunken women of the street populated the rooms as I looked around. (Where was Mrs. H_____? My fantasies about the house beat out the tawdry gossip of such television fare as Dallas. Days of Wine and Roses came to mind and all those other drinking debauches. Then of course there were the threats of murder. And most horrific of all a drunken Mr. H_____ chasing his wife around the house describing the intimate details of his little indiscretions to her. Here was a property with history. Her was something that definitely rivaled my neighbors in London and New York.

Then to top off this came the accusation of kidnap within the divorce complaint!!!

(They — Mr. and Mrs. H_____) "…have a little grandchild about three months old and the defendant threatens to steal and carry off and was interdicted by the father of the child (the son in law of plaintiff and defendant) from the same."

Can't you just see a sinister Mr. H_____ fighting over a baby with his robust son in law?

Needless to say Mrs. H_____ got her divorce and the property they had owned was sold off.

So here is a story of property ownership that gives a house its personality. For me a house is more that a list of title deeds and facts listed in history books. This is the kind of history that imbues a house and property with its unique personality — the personal history of the people living or having lived in it. That's what I love about houses. That's what I search for.

To be continued…

Your Business Name Could Be Here!

The MSF *News & Views* is now accepting a limited number of appropriate advertisements.
For information,
call 257-3741 or email jmsabens@indy.net

REAL ESTATE ROUNDUP

BY G.B. LANDRIGAN, REALTOR

BOARD OF REALTOR'S MSF STATISTICS

Figures from Metropolitan Indianapolis Board of Realtors

Hoosiers often joke about their weather. If it is a strikingly beautiful day, the snarkiest among us will darkly mutter, "Just you wait a minute." Conversely, the more optimistic will say precisely the same when the atmosphere is at its ugliest.

After a rather grouchy article by this author appeared in this space in the last issue, the winds of real estate fortune changed rather significantly. At the time, the market was stagnant and few homes were selling. Over the past few weeks, however, our neighborhood's market caught up. As you will see at the right, the inventory-to-sales balance returned to something approaching normal in the last quarter. A complete, up-to-date year-end report will appear at www.landrigan.com the first week of January.

All statistics, with a few exceptions, are from the Metropolitan Indianapolis Board of Realtors and are current to 12/7/2005:

NORTH MERIDIAN STREET
Homes Currently For Sale: 10
Average List Price: $869,250
Homes Currently Pending: 1
Homes Closed since 1/2001: 10
Average Sales Price: $728,260

NORTH PENNSYLVANIA STREET
Homes Currently For Sale: 5
Average List Price: $521,720
Homes Currently Pending: 0
Homes Closed since 1/2001: 19
Average Sales Price: $397,207

NORTH ILLINOIS STREET
Homes Currently For Sale: 10
Average List Price: $346,640
Homes Currently Pending: 0
Homes Closed since 1/2001: 10
Average Sales Price: $230,422

SIDE STREETS
Homes Currently For Sale: 6
Average List Price: $334,908
Homes Currently Pending: 0
Homes Closed since 1/2001: 6
Average Sales Price: $346,150

ALICE CARTER PARK UPDATE

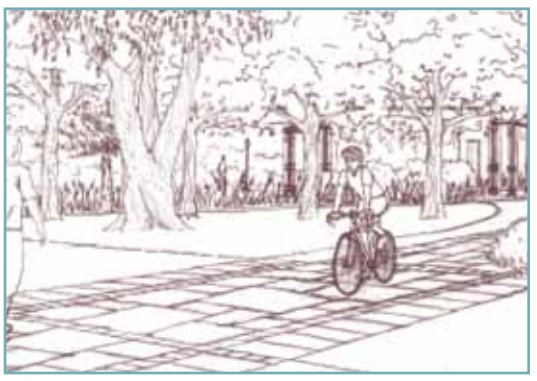
BRENT HARVEY, CHAIR.

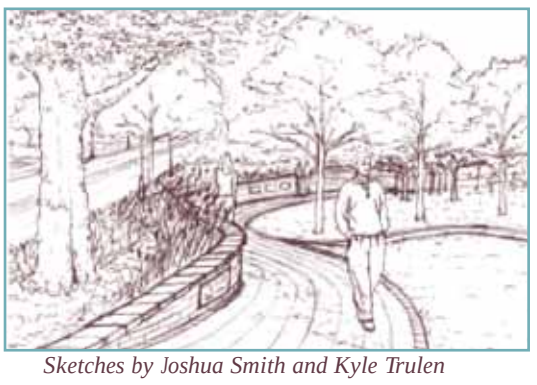
We made tremendous progress on the Alice Carter Place Park project this year. As a background, the goal of the project is to transform the park into a gateway space that celebrates the architectural and historical aspects of the neighborhoods. The committee members are Phil Cox, Stacey McCarthy, John Peoni, Alice Berger, Ted Planje, John Failey, Jim Sabens, and Brent Harvey.

We recently engaged the Ball State University Department of Landscape Architecture to assist us with some preliminary designs. A group of 5th year landscape architecture students participated in our project as part of a design studio class.

In September the students met with our committee to gain a general understanding of the design elements we were looking for and to perform a site assessment. The students were back in early October for a charrette at the Rivi. A charrette is a process where the architects and the public meet to discuss design ideas and concepts. The participation was terrific. Participants included many from the neighborhood as well as several professional architects who live in the area. Amazingly, one week later at the Annual Meeting we had 23 proposed designs!

Our next steps are to consolidate down to one or two ideal designs and to begin our fund raising efforts. If you are interested in viewing the students' designs please contact one of the committee members.





Sketches by Joshua Smith and Kyle Trulen

Elsa Iverson, BTNA, and Jim Sabens with some Ball State students at the Alice Carter Park Charette.

Brent Harvey, Chair AC Park committee with Ball State students at Alice Carter Park.

Ben Jackson, Indy Parks, with Ball State students at Alice Carter Park.

OUR MISSION

MERIDIAN STREET FOUNDATION

The Meridian Street Foundation is a charitable (501C3) neighborhood organization originally organized in 1960. The Foundation's chief purposes are the maintenance and improvement of existing health, safety and ecological standards, and the preservation of the architectural, historic and aesthetic significance of residential North Meridian Street and the neighborhood in which it lies.
Please Note: We live in the North Meridian Street Historic District, governed by the Meridian Street Preservation Act of 1971, administered by the Meridian Street Preservation Commission. Before undertaking any changes in structure or usage of your property, please check with either the MSPC or the Land Use Committee of the Meridian Street Foundation.