



# Historic Spanish Town Civic Association

## NEWSLETTER



MAY 2010 ISSUE

### HOPE EMERGES FOR SPANISH MISSION APARTMENTS



For more than six months, the neighborhood has closely watched a controversy over the fate of two Spanish Mission-style apartment buildings at the corner of Spanish Town Road and 6<sup>th</sup> Street. In December, a fire largely destroyed the upper portion of one of the twin stucco buildings. Half of the 1924 landmark complex was declared a total loss by the owner as he applied for permission to demolish it.

The extensive fire damage no doubt still indicates to passers-by that the owner could be correct and there is no hope. Yet preservationists and the Historic Spanish Town Civic Association (HSTCA) remain unconvinced that this “contributing structure” is doomed. Now, after months of behind-the-scenes talks and public pleadings before several Parish committees, a resolution seems to be near.

Before the good news, here’s what’s been going on: the owner applied to both the parish Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) and the parish Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), which implements Historic District guidelines in Spanish Town, for permission to demolish the damaged building. At its April 21 meeting, the HPC asked the property owner to produce within one month a report substantiating his claims that the building is beyond repair.

Shortly after, P&Z granted a permit to tear down the building. But that alone was not a “green light” to demolish the structure. Because Spanish Town is both a Historic District

and part of the Downtown Development District, permits are needed from both the HPC and P&Z before demolition can proceed.

On May 12th, the owner appealed the HPC deferral to the Metro Council, asking that the Council overrule the HPC (even though the HPC only *deferred* action).

At the same time, the HSTCA lodged an appeal to the Metro Council to overturn the P&Z demolition permit. As you can imagine, it was a contentious debate when the Metro Council, in one meeting, had to hear two appeals at cross purposes. The Council voted on each—and neither appeal prevailed.

Wednesday, May 19, the owner appeared before the HPC without the requested report. He then indicated he would be willing to sell the buildings. This was a significant breakthrough.

Selling the buildings, presumably to someone who will refurbish them, is an encouraging opportunity, and the HSTCA applauds this sensible decision. Once a landmark is gone, it’s gone. But the opportunity that this unique property might be rehabilitated is a positive development, especially considering our neighborhood seemed destined to suffer another certain, sad loss.

We have many concerned and effective friends to thank for this promising development, among them Metro Council Member Tara Wicker and other Council Members who support historic preservation, our allies at the Foundation for Historical Louisiana, Former HSTCA Chair and Vice-Chair Melissa Eastin and David Brown, the Board of the HSTCA and all our neighbors who have expressed concern and support through this latest controversy.

It’s not over, of course, until the Spanish Mission apartments are sold, refurbished and returned to their unique character. With your help and support, we can and will continue to work for their survival. Despite many past examples of loss, the tide of preservation is turning, and we *can* prevail.

# MAY/JUNE 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
23	24	25	25 His- toric Pres- ervation Tax In- centives Seminar 5:30-630	27	28 Live After Five 5:00-8:00 Galvez Plaza with the Long Neck Soci- ety	29 Main Street Farmer's Market 8:00 a.m. to noon
30	31	1	2	3	4	29 Main Street Farmer's Market 8:00 a.m. to noon
6	7	8	9	10	11	29 Main Street Farmer's Market 8:00 a.m. to noon
13 HSTCA Board Meet- ing 6:30 p.m.	14	15	16	17 Red Stick Roller Derby @ the River- center 7:00 p.m.	18	29 Main Street Farmer's Market 8:00 a.m. to noon
20	21 Beauti- fication committee meeting 5:30 765 Lakeland	22	23	24	25	29 Main Street Farmer's Market 8:00 a.m. to noon

## Join Our Mailing List

Please join our neighborhood e-mail list by sending us a message at [hstcabr@gmail.com](mailto:hstcabr@gmail.com) You'll receive general-interest neighborhood info, security alerts, etc.

## Spanish Town Supper Club

If you would like to host a supper club, please contact Shawn O'Brien at [obriens@legis.state.la.us](mailto:obriens@legis.state.la.us). We are in need of hosts to fill the 2010-11 calendar!

## Join Us on Facebook

Join the Historic Spanish Town Civic Association group on Facebook to receive updates about Civic Association meetings and events within the neighborhood.

## Monthly Board Meetings

HSTCA Board Meetings are held the Second Sunday of every month at 6:30. Location will be posted on the bulletin board at Capitol Grocery a week before each meeting.

## **For other events going on this month visit**

[www.artsbr.org](http://www.artsbr.org)

[www.redstickfarmersmarket.org/main](http://www.redstickfarmersmarket.org/main)

[www.downtownbatonrouge.org](http://www.downtownbatonrouge.org)

<http://manshiptheater.org/site.php>

<http://www.fhl.org/indexFHL.shtm>

To find out about more fun stuff going on in Baton Rouge, join the Cherry email list at [rougecherry@gmail.com](mailto:rougecherry@gmail.com) or the Cherry Baton Rouge group on Facebook



## SECURITY NOTES

The beautiful spring and summer weather encourages us all to stroll through the neighborhood to look at the flowers. Unfortunately, the lovely weather has also encouraged area criminals to stroll through Spanish Town in search of things to steal.

Neighbors are encouraged to be vigilant. Over the past month and a half, there have been several car break-ins and even a car theft on Spanish Town Road. Please remember to lock your cars and to never leave valuables in your vehicles where they can be seen by others. Also remember to lock your sheds lest burglars liberate your lawnmowers and power tools.

Additionally, beware of strange people approaching you and asking to do yard work. City police tell us that often these people are not so much looking for employment as they are trying to get a better idea of what valuables can be appropriated later when the homeowner is not around.

Finally, help us keep Spanish Town safe by being alert. If you see someone walking down the street and peering into car or house windows or back yards, call City Police at 389-2000. And if you have not yet paid your security dues, please send them in today using the form on p.6 of this newsletter.

## PARKING 101

Now that Spanish Town has a new parking ordinance which restricts off-street parking during the hours of 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., it's a good time to remember the city-parish's existing parking restrictions.

Sec 77:475: No person shall stop, stand or park a vehicle, or permit a vehicle registered in his name to be stopped, standing or parked... (1) on a sidewalk;...(5) on a crosswalk;...within 25 feet of a crosswalk or curb-line at an intersection; ...(16) at any place where the curb has officially been painted red;...(22) on the grass in a yard between the residence and the street in the A1, 2, 2.5, 3 or 4 districts....Sec. 77:476: Parking on neutral ground, parks, rights-of-way, sidewalks and other public and private places prohibited: ...(1) Upon a neutral ground, right-of-way, sidewalk, strip of land between a property line and street curb, or other public way...Whoever violates the provisions of this section shall be fined not more than five hundred dollars (\$500) or be imprisoned for not more than six months (6) or both.(Ordinances 7504, 9876, 13688).

Keep our neighborhood safe for pedestrians and drivers.

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION TAX CREDITS 101

Did you know you can receive tax credits of up to 51% for the rehabilitation of an historic structure? To find out how, come to the Historic Preservation Tax Credits 101 Seminar, sponsored by the Foundation for Historic Louisiana.

If your house is more than 60 years old, then it is eligible to receive these credits. Nearly every structure in Spanish Town qualifies.

This informative seminar will be held Tuesday, May 25th at the Old Governor's Mansion from 5:30-6:30. The seminar is free for members of the Foundation for Historic Louisiana and \$10 for everyone else. For more information, visit this website: <http://www.fhl.org/FHL/Home/Calendar10.shtml#Tax2010>.

## SPANISH TOWN'S PARKING PLAN IS NOW IN EFFECT

Residents of Spanish Town who park on the street should now be able to find a spot for their cars thanks to the our new parking plan. City police are now issuing tickets to anyone without a parking permit who is parked on our streets between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 6: p.m., Monday through Friday. If parking on your block is being taken up by someone without a hang tag, call City Police at 389-2000 to report a violation.



Are you a member of the Historic Spanish Town Civic Association?

If not, please go to our website <http://spanishtown.us> where you can find information on joining.

## YOUR BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE AT WORK BY FATHER HOWARD HALL

Your HSTCA Beautification Committee has been hard at work sprucing up the neighborhood for spring time. On Spring Cleanup Day in April, we worked with "Keep Baton Rouge Beautiful" (KBRB). Seventeen people picked up leaves, trimmed overhanging branches and picked up stray bits of trash on three Spanish Town streets. Additionally, two members cleaned up graffiti from 12 street signs. This May, two trees were replaced in Spanish Town by Howard Hall and Travis Moore.

In other news, a new yard sign proclaiming "House & Yard of the Quarter" and a \$50 prize was awarded to Zack Hatcher for extensive and much needed improvements to the duplex at 622-4 Spanish Town Road.

Also, we were overjoyed to see the beginning of sidewalk improvements by the Department of Public Works. Please e-mail your thanks to Pete Newkirk at [pnewkirk@brgov.com](mailto:pnewkirk@brgov.com).

The Beautification Committee was also awarded \$325 from KBRB to go towards our future improvements to the neighborhood. We hope to start on a Community Garden and get some trash containers for the neighborhood.

Other plans for the future include meeting with Brian Goad, a landscape architect from Beauregard Town, to design a Fall "mini workshop" for Spanish Town residents in order to plan the future of our 16 square block neighborhood; reworking a block-by-block map of Spanish Town; appointing block captains; looking into "dog poop" stations; and establishing criteria and taking nominations for our next quarterly beautification award.

Join us for our next meeting on Monday, June 21st at 5:30 at 765 Lakeland. Also get one of our FREE new "Be a better neighbor and you'll have a better neighborhood" bumper stickers. Call 343-3957 to obtain yours.

## NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Three board members were appointed at the May 10<sup>th</sup> HSTCA Board meeting. We're thrilled to have Stephen Carroll, Erika Katayama and Travis Moore joining the board to fill three unexpired terms. Stephen, Erika and Travis will serve until our next annual meeting in September 2011 when we elect new board members.

**Stephen Carroll** of N. 9<sup>th</sup> Street is a 30-year resident of Spanish Town. Retired from the State of Louisiana, Stephen is active in the work of his church and is looking forward to serving the neighborhood on the HSTCA Board.

**Erika Katayama** of Spanish Town Road is a 6-year resident of the neighborhood and enjoys the convenience of living near her job at the Shaw Center for the Arts. Erika enjoys the true community spirit of the Spanish Town neighborhood. Her number one concern for the neighborhood is safety and how that issue affects historic preservation, blight and renter's rights.

**Travis Moore** of Lakeland Drive is a 3-year resident of Spanish Town and enjoys biking to his office on Laurel Street. An associate landscape architect with Moore Planning Group, Travis has become an active member of the HSTCA's beautification committee. Travis' chief concern is the ever-shrinking footprint of Spanish Town and its impact on the future and viability of our unique neighborhood. Travis believes that "It is the connectivity and a real sense of place that makes Spanish Town a true neighborhood!"

Thanks to outgoing board members David Brown, Marie Constantin and Melissa Eastin for their service to the neighborhood. David and Melissa, who each served terms as chairman, gave us great leadership during the neighborhood's most recent struggles against inappropriate development., and we'll be counting on their continued help in future!



If you are interested in contacting any of our City Government leaders, there are two ways you can do this. Go to <http://www.brgov.com/dept/council/pdfs/mcmaillist.pdf>. Or, if you do not have access to a computer send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the HSTCA (Re: Government Contacts) and we will send you a copy of the list.

P.O. Box 3282 B.R., LA 70821-3282

# POISONOUS SNAKES OF SPANISH TOWN BY

JUNE PULLIAM

The fine weather has encouraged all of us to get outside and work in our yards, cleaning up our property after winter's cruel cold. But beware! We're not the only species enjoying the sunshine. Louisiana is home to many varieties of poisonous snakes, including copperheads and water moccasins (also known as cotton mouths due to the whitish appearance of their mouths when open). Moreover, living an urban environment is no protection against poisonous snakes. Both copperheads and water moccasins have been spotted in Spanish Town. "Cottonmouths, along with copperheads, account for the majority of venomous snake bites in Louisiana" (*Agkistrodon piscivorus*)

According to copperhead-snake.com, while copperheads prefer to live in wooded areas near lakes and streams where prey is more plentiful, they can also be found in the city, particularly near compost piles, decaying stumps, and wood piles. "Copperhead snakes are notorious for getting 'Everywhere' in the garden, in flower beds, in cars, coming up around porches and decks, many being so small they are an invitation to children and pets to investigate" (Copperhead Snakes). Copperheads can "be seen basking during the day when weather is cool but not cold. During the heat of summer, [they] will stay hidden during the day and become active at night" (Copperhead Snakes).

Both adult and baby copperheads the size of large earthworms can inflict a painful and dangerous bite. "Bite symptoms include intense pain, tingling, throbbing, swelling, and severe nausea" and can cause damage to "muscle and bone tissue, especially when the bite occurs in the outer extremities such as the hands and feet, areas in which there is not a large muscle mass to absorb the venom" (Copperhead Snakes).



(copperhead snake)

Water moccasins are commonly believed to be extremely aggressive snakes, which is not true—they only bite when provoked and when they feel they cannot get away from a threatening animal. However, like the copperhead, the water moccasin's bite is extremely painful and potentially deadly. In fact, water moccasin's "venom is more toxic than that of its cousin, [the copperhead] and is rich with

tissue-destructive enzymes" (*Agkistrodon piscivorus*). Symptoms of the water moccasin's bite include bruising and swelling.

And don't let the water moccasins' name fool you—these snakes are also found away from bodies of water. "On bright, sunny days [water moccasins] are usually found coiled or stretched out somewhere in the shade. In the morning and on cool days they can often be seen basking in the sunlight. At night, however, they are at their most active, when they are usually found swimming or crawling" (*Agkistrodon piscivorus*).



(water moccasin snake)

To lessen the risk of injury from these snakes, keep your yard mowed, remove any trash and replace any plant-based garden mulch with gravel mulch, which will stop the snakes hiding in it. Also use caution when moving logs or wood piles.

If you suspect that you've sighted a copperhead or water moccasin in your yard, call Animal Control at 774-7700. Be prepared to tell the officer where you last saw the snake so that s/he can safely remove it from your yard.

And if you are bitten by what you suspect to be a poisonous snake, tie off the affected area with a tourniquet to prevent the spread of the poison and get to the nearest emergency room immediately.

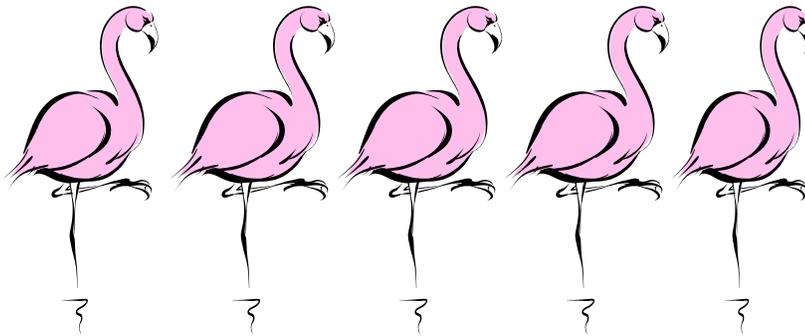
***Agkistrodon piscivorus* Water Moccasin.** Wikipedia.org . [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water\\_moccasin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_moccasin)

**Copperhead Snakes.** <http://www.copperhead-snake.com>

**Venomous Snakes.** Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries. [http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/experience/lawildlife/nongame/snakes\\_of\\_louisiana\\_venomous.cfm](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/experience/lawildlife/nongame/snakes_of_louisiana_venomous.cfm)

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**VISIT US ONLINE AT**  
**[www.spanishtown.us](http://www.spanishtown.us) or on**  
**Facebook at Historic Span-**  
**ish Town Civic Association**  
  
**Or email us at**  
**[hstcabr@gmail.com](mailto:hstcabr@gmail.com)**



**Please contribute to neighborhood security!**

Essential security patrols are privately funded, and cost the HSTCA \$250 a week. If you have not yet contributed, please consider giving at least \$20 annually to help keep Spanish Town safe.

Resident \$20.00   Property Owner \$20.00   Business Owner \$20.00

Preservationist \$20.00   Student \$10.00   Senior Citizen \$10.0

My contribution to neighborhood security: \$\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

I am willing to help with (circle): Beautification, Security, Fundraising, Newsletter,  
Arts Festival, Crime Prevention, Parking, Community Relations

Return your completed form to HSTCA ° P.O. Box 3282 ° B.R., LA. 70821-3282