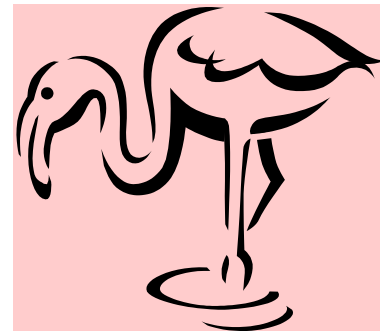


# Historic Spanish Town Civic Association Newsletter

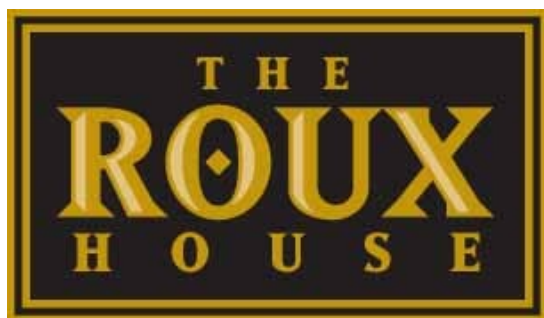
*Summer 2010 Issue*



## ANNUAL HSTCA MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Join us from 2-5 p.m. Sunday, September 26th at the Louisiana State Museum (660 N. 4th St., across from the State Library) for the annual Civic Association membership meeting where we will pass a good time and vote on Civic Association board members for the 2010-2011 term. Everyone who has paid his or her annual dues by September 26th is eligible to vote. If you cannot join us on the 26th, please complete the membership form on the back of this newsletter.

In addition to electing board members, we'll enjoy pizza and beer and have the chance to win prizes such as gift certificates to downtown eateries and eclectic bits of Spanish Town memorabilia. So please make plans to join us on the last Sunday in September.



### 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 and Twitter

Join the Historic Spanish Town Civic Association group on Facebook to receive updates about Civic Association meetings and events within the neighborhood. Receive security alert tweets by following us on Twitter at HSTCA.

## THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS

The HSTCA would like to thank Schlitz and Giggles, The Roux House and Happy's Irish Pub for supplying us with food and cups for our annual meeting.

Please patronize these downtown businesses and let them know that you appreciate their beneficence towards Spanish Town.

We would also like to extend our thanks to John Williams of the Beer League of Louisiana donating 10 cases of beer.

## A LETTER FROM YOUR CIVIC ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

In a vote of our civic association three years ago, Spanish Town chose to join a new-to-Baton Rouge protection structure. Using national standards three years ago, we surveyed all properties and classified each at some level of, "contributing" to the character of our Historic District. After writing Guidelines to regulate our own development, the neighborhood voted to be enrolled under the protection of the new Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). The HPC, we hoped, would enforce the rules we wrote.

Looking back, it's been a mixed bag of success. Although the HPC has provided valuable enforcement in recent controversies, it has sometimes ignored the rules we wrote.

An example of this mixed success is the, "Demolition by Neglect" ordinance. It discourages property owners from allowing structures to deteriorate through lack of maintenance. At a recent Planning and Zoning Commission meeting, a member of that board suggested the ordinance be amended to include only, "contributing structures." The neighborhood association responded with a resolution urging all structures in a Historic District remain protected. On August 18, the Historic Preservation Commission, we believe unwisely, accepted the rewrite. What we could soon have is protection for only, "contributing structures." We will continue to argue it should be applied to all properties.

In December, one of the pair of Mission Revival-style apartments at 6<sup>th</sup> and Spanish Town Road burned. The owner applied to the HPC to tear it down. HSTCA successfully argued it should and could be restored. While the damage seems to indicate it is a total loss, we have seen restorations of structures just as damaged. In this case, the HPC sided with preservationists and denied demolition.

I recognize this issue is controversial. Neighbors disagree whether the building can be saved. We applaud

the owner's decision to sell the property to someone who can restore it. If we'd have given up early, the building would already be gone.

Another example of the mixed performance we've seen from the HPC is in enforcement of the Historic District Guidelines we wrote and trusted the HPC would enforce. The rules include, "Do not introduce new fences, gates, or walls in the front yard where these elements are not traditionally found," "Retain and preserve original sidewalk materials where they exist," and "The consistent width of sidewalks in the District shall be adhered to." Parish ordinances also forbid the blocking of a sidewalk or erection of a fence at an intersection.

Yet a fence under construction at the corner of Spanish Town Road and 5<sup>th</sup> Street seems to violate each of these rules and laws. I encourage neighbors to visit this corner and note a 16 inch permanent brick encroachment onto the sidewalk. Considering an existing utility pole on 5<sup>th</sup> Street, the new construction denies wheelchair passage over a public right-of-way, the sidewalk. When you read, "Do not introduce new fences..." do the words seem open to interpretation?

For more than one year, former HSTCA Chair David Brown and succeeding administrations have objected to the sidewalk blockage, the fence height (nearly nine feet) and non-enforcement by city officials of public safety laws and our Guidelines. On June 16, HSTCA asked the HPC to enforce Spanish Town's rule on new fences - but it did not. One Commissioner said, "It will be pretty."

We didn't ask them to enforce, "pretty." We asked them to enforce the rules we wrote. It is regrettable that the HPC, the Board of Adjustments and the Metro Council all blessed a structure being erected in violation of our neighborhood Guidelines and parish law. At this time, we are pursuing further appeals.

Jeff Duhe  
Chair, HSTCA

## THE MISSION APARTMENTS ON SPANISH TOWN ROAD MIGHT HAVE A BUYER SOON



From *The Baton Rouge Business Report*, 2 September 2010 a.m. edition, by Timothy Boone

More than eight months after a Spanish Town apartment building was badly damaged by a fire, the burned-out building is still waiting for a make-over. Stuart Nixon, who owns the building, wanted to demolish the 1920s-era building, but he was blocked in May by the Historic Preservation Committee. The HPC wants to see the building preserved. Carolyn Bennett, executive director of the Foundation for Historical Louisiana, says her office has been working with a potential buyer. "We created elevations and a floor plan and have done a rendering of what it could be returned to," she says. The potential buyer wants to convert the building into a duplex or triplex, instead of the four-unit development it was at the time of the fire. FHL officials say they expect to hear next week from the prospective buyer. Nixon says he hasn't received an offer from the buyer.



## PLEASE DON'T LET YOUR CATS LITTER

Spring and summer have brought more than balmy temperatures and an increased pollen count to Baton Rouge. This time of year is also kitten season. While kittens are cute, they become cats who can begin reproducing at the age of 6 months. An unsprayed female cat and her mate can produce 12 kittens in just one year! This same pair and all of its offspring, producing 2 litters per year, with 2.8 kittens surviving per litter, can generate 11,606,077 cats in 9 years.

So it is urgent that cats and kittens be spayed or neutered as soon as possible. Sadly, people have been hesitant to fix their pets, let alone any strays who show up, because the cost can be prohibitively expensive. Local vets can charge up to \$100 to neuter a male cat and up to \$250 to spay a female cat.

Fortunately, Baton Rouge now has a low cost spay neuter clinic that will fix males for \$25 and females for \$45. The Baton Rouge Spay Neuter Clinic is located at 7807 Greenwell Springs Road, across the street from Associated Veterinary Services, and they will take both strays and ferals (cats who are completely wild and must be trapped). It is necessary to make an appointment for females, whose surgery is a bit more complicated, but males can be dropped off for neutering with no appointment by 7:30 a.m. Because it is difficult to tell the sex of a feral cat, appointments must be made for them too. Kittens as young as 2 months or weighing at least 5 lbs. are big enough to be spayed or neutered.

Spaying or neutering benefits both the cats and their human friends. The spayed or neutered cat no longer engages in negative behaviors associated with mating such as spraying, protracted yowling (which is a mating call), fighting or roaming. Overall, spayed and neutered cats live longer, healthier lives.

So please help us stop cats from littering. Fix your cats. And fix the cats who show up in your yard, even if you plan on finding them a forever home. It's better to have these cats fixed before turning them over to a new owner rather than hoping that they do the right thing. And encourage your friends and neighbors to fix their cats too. It's important.

## HELP US FIGHT CRIME IN SPANISH TOWN by Allan Williams

Spanish Town is beset by what the police refer to as opportunistic criminal activity where outsiders pass through the neighborhood to case likely items to steal. This is how it works. A point person (if there is a group involved) walks, bikes or drives the neighborhood observing things areas that look vulnerable to intrusion and looking for unsecured items that can be hocked at a pawn shop. Walkers are very likely to be peering into driveways and/or onto porches. Walkers, if they feel that they have passed a resident who may suspect their intentions, will often walk 50 steps or so and then turn around to see if they are being observed...a dead give-away about who they are and what their intentions are. After several trips through Spanish Town, the most likely target car or house porch is victimized.

### Secure Your Belongings

Sadly, residents unknowingly facilitate this type of criminal activity by leaving things as laptops, cameras, money, briefcases and even firearms in their cars in plain view, and in some cases, even neglecting to lock their car doors or forgetting to remove their keys from the ignition or the door. Worse still, this type of activity is encouraged by I have done each and every one of these things myself.

### Be Wary of Strangers

A second type of opportunistic criminal activity occurs when strangers passing approach residents and ask for money to perform odd jobs. Their stories might evoke pity ("Can you spare a few bucks for my baby who is out of formula?") or cause us to believe they are the trusted helpers of our neighbors ("I do yard work for Mr. Fred. Can't I do some for you today?") Unfortunately, many of these people are not the good-hearted down-on-their-luck individuals they appear to be. Instead, they too are often criminals who have hit upon yet another way to case the neighborhood so that they can return in order to help themselves to unsecured items.

Please help us discourage crime in Spanish Town by always locking your cars, sheds, and houses; by never leaving valuables in plain view, and by not giving money to strangers or hiring them to do odd jobs. Moreover, always call City Police (389-2000) and Capitol Police (342-5911) if you are approached by a stranger in this way, or if you see someone peering into house or car windows, trying car door handles, or just loitering and appearing to be out of place.

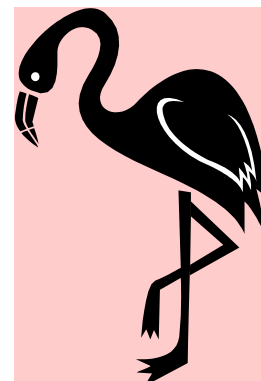
### Let There Be Light

Another way to fight crime in Spanish Town is to deprive criminals of the cover of darkness. Turn on your porch and security lights at dusk and keep them on all night! Sadly, too few of us do this at present. Security-minded residents who have surveyed Spanish Town in the evening have noticed that fewer than 50% of residents turn on porch and/or security lights, which makes the streets dark and inviting to criminals. Remember that keeping your property well-lit is an inexpensive way to deter crime. Also make sure that your security lights are effective by trimming any shrubs or low hanging tree branches that impede their ability to illuminate. Finally, make sure that the street lights near your home are functioning. You can report any outages to Entergy through this website:

<https://secure.entergy.com/forms/StreetLights.aspx?FormId=132&RegionId=LA>

### Pay Your HSTCA Security Patrol Dues

Finally, help the neighborhood continue to pay for off duty city police officers to patrol our streets when we are sleeping. Send in those security patrol dues using the handy form on the back of this newsletter.



## CAPITOL GROCERY NOW SELLS SPACE AGE POOPER SCOOPERS

You want to be a good neighbor and curb your dog, but carrying around a little plastic bag of Fido's doo doo is so icky! What to do with Fido's doo doo?

Get a space age pooper scooper at Capitol Grocery for only \$8. These easy to use scoopers allow you to pick up your dog's mess without having to bend down and get too near it so you can enjoy your special time with your best friend. When you get home, disposal is quick and easy. These sturdy scoopers are made of plastic, so they're light and easy to clean.

## HOUSE AND YARD OF THE QUARTER

Congratulations to Bill and Peggy Goode, who are the recipients of both the July-September House of the Quarter and Yard of the Quarter awards for their work at 711 N. 6th including restoration of porch/facade, interior renovations/restoration and improvements to their off-street parking.

## A LOSS IN SPANISH TOWN

Mary Jane Markham passed away July 29th, 2010. As some of you will recall, Mary Jane was married to Ed Markham, and both were employees of Capitol Grocery. Over the past few years, Mary Jane and Ed made their home in the Catholic Presbyterian Apartments on North Street.

Mary Jane was a Hoosier, and was a graduate of Ball State University in Muncie, where she completed a master's degree and later taught. She moved to Louisiana and taught high school in Morgan City. In 1986, she moved to Spanish Town, working for two years at Capitol Grocery and going on to work in the East Baton Rouge Parish library system for 13 years before her retirement in 2005.

A memorial service was held for Mary Jane in the Catholic Presbyterian Apartments on August 21st.

## HELP US KEEP SPANISH TOWN BEAUTIFUL

Please help the Spanish Town Beautification Committee keep our neighborhood beautiful. On Saturday, September 18th, we'll gather at Capitol Grocery at 8:30 a.m. and work until noon with members of Keep Baton Rouge Beautiful to do a general clean-up of the neighborhood.

And please attend our next beautification committee meeting on Monday, October 4th at 5:30, 765 Lakeland.

## AUGUST CLEAN-UP DAY A SUCCESS

Early Saturday, August 21st, while you were sleeping many of your Spanish Town friends and neighbors were pruning low-hanging limbs that prevent street lights from illuminating our neighborhood at night and trimming overgrown flora that make it difficult for pedestrians to use the sidewalk.

Pictured below are Travis Moore and other residents hard at work to make Spanish Town beautiful and safe. Later, the crew posed with the pile of debris they had amassed to be hauled away by Waste Management



Historic Spanish Town Civic Association  
P. O. Box 3282  
Baton Rouge, LA 70821-3282

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

**HSTCA MEEMBERSHIP DUES AND SECURITY CONTRIBUTION FORM**

Please complete and return with your membership and/or security dues by September 26. Checks are payable to HSTCA. Only members may vote at the annual membership meeting.

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Enclosed is my payment of \_\_\_\_\_ (check all that apply)

Membership \_\_\_\_\_ Individual (\$40) \_\_\_\_\_ Household (\$60) \_\_\_\_\_ Student/Senior Citizen (\$20)

Security \_\_\_\_\_ Homeowner (\$120) \_\_\_\_\_ Landlord (\$240 per building)

I would like to assist with (circle): Beautification, Fundraising, Newsletter, Security, Preservation.

Include my email address on the Spanish Town Security Alerts list. Y \_\_\_\_\_ N \_\_\_\_\_

Include my email address on the Spanish Town Updates email list. Y \_\_\_\_\_ N \_\_\_\_\_

HSTCA does not share email lists.

**Please return your completed form to HSTCA, PO Box 3282, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-3282**

Thank you for your support of Baton Rouge's original neighborhood!