

West Adams Matters

February 2016 Number 317

West Adams Named Los Angeles' Best Neighborhood!

Curbed LA, an on-line blog devoted to Los Angeles and its real estate, announced on January 4th that West Adams had been voted by its readers as the best neighborhood in Los Angeles for 2015. This recognition came following a heated competition between the two finalists, West Adams and Pacoima, with the former ultimately receiving the most votes.

That voting success was the result of a significant effort by so many within the greater West Adams neighborhoods. WAHA sent out emails to our entire membership database, as well as more than 1000 people who have attended WAHA tours in the past several years – urging everyone to vote for West Adams. The energy cranked up over several days leading up to the runoff contest, each round receiving more and more participants. Ultimately, more than 9000 votes were cast in the final battle for the title "Los Angeles Neighborhood of the Year.

Soon afterward writer Bianca Barragan conducted a telephone interview with John Patterson, former WAHA president and current board member. With her kind permission we here reprint excerpts from the interview:

A Resident Expert's Guide to West Adams, Los Angeles's Neighborhood of the Year

Tuesday, January 12, 2016, by Bianca Barragan (Reprinted with permission)

The People's Guide takes a page from Curbed SF and offers tours of LA's neighborhoods, led by loyal readers, favorite bloggers, and other luminaries of our choosing. We kick off Curbed LA's inaugural episode by welcoming a resident of the Curbed Cup's 2015 Neighborhood of the Year, West Adams—communications director (and former president) of the West Adams Heritage Association John Patterson. Patterson also runs the interior design firm Inspired Living Interiors, which does restoration and interiors in West Adams and beyond.

What are the boundaries of West Adams?

Well, this is one of the things that we want to make sure that we can get across with [Curbed LA] readers, because what Curbed was describing as West Adams is not the real West Adams. Historic West Adams stretches from Figueroa to Crenshaw. It's depicted on

(Continued on page 2)

Another Successful Holiday Tour

The 2015 Holiday Tour was a resounding success from start to finish. A wonderful neighborhood, delightful homeowners and delicious food attracted over 450 guests;

a veritable army of volunteers allowed it to run so smoothly. Over 150 people generously gave their time and talents to this effort, and while we can never really adequately thank them, we're doing our best to acknowledge each and every contribution to the overall effort supporting WAHA's largest fundraising event of the year! Special thanks go to Lisa Raymond in her capacity of Volunteer coordinator (see related article on page 10.)





Curbed L.A. (continued)

the Santa Monica Freeway with [signs that say] "Historic West Adams Next Six Exits." But amongst that area, each of those individual neighborhoods have different names also. There's University Park, but that's a part of West Adams. There's Harvard Heights, there are the West Adams Avenues, there's Arlington Heights, there's Jefferson Park, there's the Adams-Normadie district—all of these are parts of the West Adams district. They each maintain their own individuality of local block clubs and neighborhood associations, but it's all West Adams.

. . . [Each neighborhood] is also defined by the architecture. The Jefferson Park area, for example, there are almost exclusively single-

story Craftsman bungalows, whereas the other neighborhoods take on different architectural characteristics, depending on the decades in which that area was settled. University Park close to Figueroa has not only the Victorians around USC and on Hoover Boulevard, but also the wonderful mansions of St. James Square and Chester Place—where the Doheny Mansion is—that now make up Mount Saint Mary's College.

Tell us something we don't know about your neighborhood.

[West Adams] has an incredible sense of community—probably the strongest sense of community I've experienced anywhere of all the places I've lived in the

last 30 years. . . Neighbors interacting with neighbors, socializing. Helping each other out. Part of the way the West Adams Heritage Association (WAHA) formed was very much along those lines, like "What electrician did you find that knows how to deal with knoband-tube wiring and changing it?" and that has all evolved into a very integrated—we go to dinner parties at each others' houses and everyone interacts quite a bit with each other.

Local customs?

Our Arlington Heights neighborhood does a neighborhood house tour every holiday season, basically for each other—neighbors visiting neighbors in the form of that. WAHA has, for 30-plus years, done a series of architectural tours. The holiday tour took on the new scope of being a progressive dinner by putting a different spin on that architectural tour. We still visited six different houses, but in addition to checking out the architecture, we also get to have appetizers and champagne, then a soup and salad course, then dinner and then a dessert house.

...We also do a living history tour, which is very unique, at the Angelus Rosedale Cemetery at the corner of Normandie and Washington Boulevard. It's one of the oldest cemeteries in Los Angeles. Every September we do a living history tour whereby different actors portray the people buried there. In full costume and with sets, they tell their story—their part of Los Angeles history—and people come from all over Los Angeles to visit our cemetery and learn history that way.

What are some hidden gems of West Adams?

Almost every house is a hidden gem, even those that have been disregarded or stuccoed over. You're very much apt to find leaded glass in a built-in cabinet and wood beams, etc. In the way of architectural hidden gems, the surprise that lives in West Adams is a [Raphael] Soriano house, just south of Adams Boulelvard, built

> for Glen Lukens, the California ceramicist. This was his studio and home. It was very much abandoned and headed for the bulldozer, and it's been now taken over and restored and is in absolutely pristine condition once again. No one really looks to West Adams as a Mid-Century Modern neighborhood, and it's certainly not as a neighborhood, but [the Lukens house is] certainly a hidden gem amongst all these century-old houses.

What are the neighborhood hot spots or meeting places?

Right now we have a Sunday farmers market at Wellington Square, which is between Crenshaw and West Avenue—which is generally considered the furthest west

boundary of West Adams, even though the West Adams neighborhood council goes further, all the way to La Brea/ Fairfax, etc. The library on Jefferson plays a very central role [in West Adams]. The South Seas house on Arlington plays a very central role to the neighborhood and the associated park that's right there at 24th Street. As far as a new restaurant, we were very very lucky to have Revolutionario Tacos open up on Jefferson just east of Normandie. . . It's North African prepared flavors served inside a taco. They're incredible.

Most common sight in the 'hood?

Beautiful historic architecture.

No neighborhood is perfect; what's not so great about this one?

Our commercial corridors are pretty sad-looking. . . Washington has too many restaurant supply stores. There's too many auto supply stores on all the boulevards. There's nothing unique about West Adams as far as crime or whatnot. There's gang activity in all parts of LA, but I won't pretend we don't have some element of that in our neighborhood also. Our home has have never been burglarized. I removed the grates from my windows when we did the restoration and I have not regretted that. Those all went up [in the area] a couple decades ago, and most of them are starting to come down now.







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WAHA Thanks Our Volunteers





Check In House 2650 Halldale Avenue Owners: Jessica & Peter King

House Captain: Natalie Neith

Volunteer team: SeElcy Caldwell Jeanne Eaton Ellen Farwell Martha Bringas Alessia Badagliacca Dalia Bagdziunaite Jane McMahon Carmen Price Rebecca Sekulich Marianna Szoke Maxine Toler Alice Young-Singleton Tibor Vojtko

elected the declarde

Appetizer House 2700 S. La Salle Avenue Owner: Steve Schlier

House Captain: Jean Cade Kitchen Captain: Jeff Valdez Head Docent: Don Lynch

Volunteer team: Suzy Adler Audrey Arlington Claire Chu John Kurtz Norma Davis Dayna Dorris Colleen Gong Alan Hall Amy Hall Judy Hawkins Rob Johnson Karin McGaughey Vern Menden Gail Peterson Paula Phillips Norma Reynolds Jim Robinson David Safer Bernadette Torres-Olivares Terry Speth Angela Whitewall Catherine Williams Bill Wolfe



Soup House 2942 S. La Salle Avenue Owners: Jennifer & Jason Robison

House Captain: Laura Meyers Kitchen Captain: Chris Eisenberg

Volunteer team: Kathleen Campbell James Carey Art Curtis Mel Embree Margaret Gascoigne Andrew Gross Jane Harrington Chris Hedburg Blake Kuhre Adrienne Motlgh-Kuhre Julie McGinn Kim Michener James Mills Adele Nico David Nico

Gisa Nico Hunter Ochs Lanna Pian Cat Slater Marius Stelly Christie Webb Judith Wyle



Volunteers matter!



Salad House 2812 Dalton Avenue Owners: Christina Kwok & Wilson Nieves

House Captains: Laurene Landon & Addison Wright Kitchen Captains: Janel Glover & James Lee Head Docent: Don Weggeman

Volunteer team: Allen Hamburger Valerie Richards Dee Robinson Flo Selfman



Dinner House 2827 Brighton Avenue Owners: Susanna Sarmiento & Ben Creighton

House Captain: John Patterson Kitchen Captain: Eric Bronson Hostess: Cheryl Valdez

Volunteer team: Stacey Anthony Brena Bronson Liz Cooper Esra Maralyn Facey Lyn Gillson Cheryl Harrington Dierdre Higgins

- Alexa Hunter Ari Lentini Tali Lentini AJ Lentini Michael Tovah & Michael Raphael Lieberman Joe McManus Marisha Corinne
- Morris Jackie Moyer Steve Moyer Chrys Massey-Rhodes Josh Rhodes Lara Sonderstrom Roland Souza Morris Weber Lindsey Wiggins

Dessert House 2776 S La Salle Avenue Owners: Vanessa Place & Theresa Carmody

House Captain: Anne Hakes & Regina Berry

Volunteer team: Victoria Brown Chris Carlson Suzanne Henderson Pamela Putnam Gisele Sanchez Rochet Steve Stautzenback Suzanne Stautzenback Silvie Jacobsen Walker Underwood Candy Wynne











Preservation Update Feb 2016: Demolition Is Forever

By now, most WAHA members are aware of the fraudulent demolition of the historic Victorian cottage at 1208 W 25th Street. On December 10, University Park developers Henry Fan and Charles Kim, who were informed by Building and Safety that their demolition permit was invalid and about to be revoked, directed their project manager-contractor Aaron Belliston of BMR Enterprises to demolish the Victorian cottage. This home was identified by SurveyLA as a historic resource. Informed of the demolition, Ken Bernstein of the Office of Historic Resources

the Principal City Planner, responded "we certainly hope that DBS does follow up and ensure there are consequences to this apparently willful disregard of the City's stop order."

WAHA asked that the Department of Building and Safety take all steps available to see that this



1208 West 25th Street

flagrant disregard of process does not go unpunished, including invoking Section 91.1064.1(10) of the Los Angeles Municipal Code, otherwise known as the "Scorched Earth Ordinance."

It is a great disappointment that after WAHA's efforts to protect our architectural and cultural history, we are again faced with a demolition of a historic resource. In this current phase of development fever,

many vernacular historic buildings are at risk unless they are in an HPOZ or are listed as a Historic Cultural Monument.

While the City created SurveyLA which inventories city wide historic resources, SurveyLA does not provide any protections to surveyed historic properties other those available under the California Environmental Quality Act. So we unfortunately can be aware of historic resources without any mechanism to protect them unless they are subject to a discretionary action under the LAMC (Los Angeles Municipal Code.) There is nothing to prevent a developer from demolishing a historic building and creating a vacant parcel of land under the guise of not having future development plans. (This is not the case at 1208 West 25th Street. The developer informed Building & Safety that he plans to build a duplex.) Many West Adams areas are experiencing a frenzy of student housing development creating a huge bubble in land value and outpacing any purchasing competition from a potential homeowner. What were affordable homeowner properties are now being purchased by developers and then demolished without any replacement housing plans.

The other kind of demolition we are seeing is demolition by neglect. The Fitzgerald Mansion at 3115 West Adams Boulevard has been subjected to slow deterioration with some abusive uses along the way. This home was subject to foreclosure, purchased by a Texasbased company, went back on the market in 2011 and was sold in 2015. Through the diligence of neighbors and some quick intervention by Preservation Committee member Laura Meyers, exterior work was observed being done on the building without the required permits. The work was halted. WAHA hopes that the new owners will cherish this historic resource and proceed with obtaining the necessary permits. As an HCM, all changes are subject to a Historic Preservation review by the City Architect. One of most frustrating detriments to preservation is the inability to enforce the laws holding errant owners accountable to see that buildings are protected and stabilized from deterioration. Even within HPOZs and HCM designated property protection, enforcement of the rules and holding delinquent owners accountable is a major problem.

Demolition is forever. It is one of the most damaging actions to the character of a historic neighborhood. When a building is demolished without a valid permit, the "Scorched Earth Ordinance" can be applied. As stated in this ordinance, "The department shall have the authority to withhold a building permit or relocation permit for a site if the department determines that demolition or relocation work has been



Fitzgerald Mansion, 3115 Adams Boulevard

done on the site without the benefit of required demolition or relocation permits. If the department, after notice and hearing, makes this determination, the department shall also have the authority to record an affidavit with the County Recorder stating that no permits for any new development shall be issued on the property for a period of five years."

This ordinance does not however, replace the historic resource which is gone forever. Some developers will go to extraordinary lengths to demolish a historic building. One example of this is where one development team claimed there was "riot damage" to obtain a demolition permit for the National Register Hodgman House at 2377 Scarff Street in August 1992. Building and Safety invoked the scorched earth provision of the LAMC for the first time in 2003. The Giese residence (the last remaining 19th century home on Bunker Hill) at 840 Cesar Chavez Boulevard, was demolished by G.H. Palmer Associates without a demolition permit. (Then) Council member Ed Reyes, held hearings on the matter resulting in Building and Safety imposing the five year prohibition on issuing any permits for the site. Subsequently, Palmer sued the city in state and federal courts, which resulted in a settlement wherein Palmer agreed to pay \$200,000 to the City for a fund for low income and moderate income families living in historic houses, \$50,000 to the Chinese Cultural Historical Society and provide parking spaces for the Evans Learning Center across from his development site.

The provision was also applied when the Stoddard House at 1458 West 23rd Street was demolished without permits in 2004. While the errant owners were apologetic and claimed they did not know they were in an HPOZ, the City appropriately imposed the five year prohibition on issuance of any building permits. And this month on January 28, Building and Safety will conduct a scorched earth hearing on the nonpermitted demolition of a contributing structure at 2516 S 13th Ave, located in the West Adams Terrace HPOZ. The hearing will be at 10:00 AM, at 3550 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1800.

In the coming year, WAHA will continue efforts to seek solutions to the rash of demolitions of vernacular historic homes and neglected monuments. WAHA's preservation committee and WAHA board members attend many public hearings and provide comments on environmental documents (NDs, MNDs, and EIRs) and other City actions. We want to expand at least two HPOZs: Harvard Heights to include the 26 structures in West Adams Heights and University Park to include the orphaned six blocks from the south side of 24th Street to Adams, and between Hoover and Vermont. These are just some of our preservation advocacy efforts for the coming year. Stay tuned for continuing reports.



Stoddard House, 1458 West 23rd Street



2516 13th Avenue

Jean Frost is the current Preservation Committee Chair. Contact her at preservation@westadamsheritage.org.





As much as I'd like to take credit for all of our impressive accomplishments in 2015, I have to be honest and make sure the right people get the credit they deserve. To begin, the newsletter committee, led by John Patterson (Communications Committee Chair) has turned the corner. They're working on a plan to develop our terrific newsletter into a modern communication tool with input from a variety of people within

WAHA. This new newsletter will be produced digitally and feature not only short missives on fun topics such as the variety of unique built-ins throughout West Adams homes but it will also contain longer articles on important issues such as oil drilling in our neighborhoods. We'll have the ability to add color photos and graphics throughout the document to enhance the storytelling appeal of the information. The committee wants to tap into the wealth of talent who live in WAHA; writers, photographers, artisans and artists - consider this your invitation to participate.

We had three very successful home tours. When I say "We", I specifically mean the Preservation Committee (June tour "Elegant Mansions of West Adams"), the Living History Tour Committee (Angelus-Rosedale Cemetery residents brought to life). and the Holiday Tour Committee ("Deck the Halls" Progressive Dinner). I was not on any committee and had virtually nothing to do with any of the tours.



But I attended and thoroughly enjoyed all three.

There were several potluck meals with wonderful speakers held in incredible member homes as well as the 4th of July Ice Cream Social and Cookie Baking events. Suzie Henderson, the Events Committee Chair was the driving force and creative genius who made them all happen.

Last and most important are the triumphs of the Preservation Committee. The hard work of this elite and dedicated group under the leadership of Jean Frost was responsible for the major victory on the Bishop Mansion. The committee's strategy to effectively use our limited resources to obtain very important objectives shows that WAHA is a force to be reckoned with. This strength will be particularly useful in addressing the more recent and intentional demolitions that have taken place.

WAHA members continue to work and improve our community and we have much to be proud of from the past year. Georgia Tolliver created the bronze sculpture of Paul Revere Williams at the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Building while continuing to lead outreach to businesses on the commercial corridors. Michael Salman and Steve Peckman fought to protect the health and environment of our neighborhoods from the negative effects of the operation and possible expansion of local oil drilling sites.

These accomplishments for 2015 will not last unless we keep working. Encourage your friends and neighbors to become members if they aren't. Consider increasing your level of membership and volunteer for a committee or a project. This organization can't be effective without your participation.

Your President for now Lore Hilburg

Lore Hilburg can be contacted at president@westadamsheritage.org.

Special Thanks to Laura Meyers

Laura Meyers is stepping down from her role as the Editor of the WAHA Matters Newsletter. Laura has been the sole driving force keeping this Newsletter going for quite a long time. Her involvement has been crucial not only to maintaining the journalistic accuracy and integrity of this publication but also making sure the



content kept all members informed of every facet of life in West Adams. We wish to express our deep gratitude for all the hard work and long hours she's put in over her many years of service to WAHA in general and specifically with her work on this publication.

Lisa Raymond, WAHA Volunteer Coordinator



Lisa Raymond has become a major force for volunteerism within the WAHA community, providing professional organization skills to make sure WAHA events have the resources we need to be successful. In the short time she's been the WAHA Volunteer Coordinator, she's accomplished a lot. She sat down with me to talk a little about herself. She currently resides in Arlington Heights and has history in Lafayette Square which she considers her second home.

How did you get involved in WAHA?

I don't remember when I started volunteering for WAHA events, but Lara Soderstrom would invite me to volunteer on several occasions over the years. My first experience was for the Living History Tour, parking vehicles. It was a beautiful day. I enjoyed talking with the guests and eventually going on the tour. I was impressed. So I said yes to more volunteer opportunities again and again.



Why do you volunteer for WAHA events?

I volunteer for WAHA events because I enjoy volunteering, I find the events interesting, and I really like the community of people in this organization. I like WAHA's mission to preserve the West Adams community's architectural and cultural heritage. The buildings around here are beautiful and I love learning about the history. I am not very literate in regards to architecture but I do love looking at the buildings, listening to enthusiasts and learning about history.

Why did you become the Volunteer Coordinator for WAHA?

I became the volunteer coordinator after working one of the tours last year. There are a lot of moving parts and I thought my experience coordinating and managing film production could be useful to WAHA organizers. I offered to take the position in the fall and began by assisting the Living History Tour team.

What would you say are the most important tasks you've accomplished so far?

I've created and updated a database of volunteers that can be sorted by the events they're interested participating in. I'm tying this information into our email contact database so it can be accessed and edited by Event team leaders during pre-production. This will allow everyone on the team to see the progress of each team as it is being formed.



Volunteers celebrating volunteers! This is the fun-loving team that prepared all the delicious food for our "Volunteer Appreciation Celebration" held on January 9th at Lore Hilburg's Buckingham offices. Jean Cade, Regina Berry, Dana Doris and Jeff Valdez.

Built-ins and Other Features

In future newsletters WAHA would like to highlight some of the interesting features of our homes. All throughout West Adams are houses with interesting architectural details, stained glass, light fixtures and built-ins. While not every home can or will be on a tour, we'd still like to see some of what makes them unique.

The Edwardian era saw a proliferation of built-in furnishings. It's safe to say that nearly every house constructed in West Adams has them in some form or another. Victorian homes did not have kitchen cabinets. People had free standing cabinets, often known as "hoosiers," named after the Hoosier Manufacturing Company. They often contained work areas, drawers, shelves, and even bins for flour and sugar storage. Not only did kitchen cabinets become built in during the early years of the twentieth century, but they have remained a built in fixture in homes ever since.

Bedroom closets are another form of built-in that never went away. Early homes had free standing wardrobes for holding clothing. Today we not only take closets for granted, but if a bedroom does not have one it cannot be considered an actual bedroom when advertising your home for sale.



A built-in Hoosier cabinet in the kitchen of the author's home in Western Heights, which includes a cutting board and bins for flour and sugar.

But other forms of built in furniture have faded with the times, even though they were very much in fashion a hundred years ago. It seems as if few Edwardian homes in West Adams were built without china cabinets or bookcases. Even apartment buildings featured them, which isn't surprising as West Adams was a prominent neighborhood and even its rental housing seemed above average.

Beds, desks, kitchen tables and chairs, ironing boards, shoe shine kits, chests of drawers and linen cabinets are just some of the built-ins here in our neighborhood. I've even seen a home in Pasadena that had a built in Victrola. While popular

throughout the United States, such features were even more practical in the West. People moving to California not only saved money by not having to ship as much furniture, but they were spared the expense of buying as much when they moved into a new home that had a lot of built-ins.

If you have a built in feature of some kind in your home which you would like to share with our readers or on our website, please let us know. We'd love to hear from you. Please email or send a photo to News@ WestAdamsHeritage.org.



Don Lynch is a well-known historian, one of the authors of "West Adams" and longtime WAHA member



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In 1998, Davidson Plumbing was purchased by it's current owner, Jose Navidad (standing at the far right in the picture). As the story goes, shortly after purchasing the business, Jose was approached by Tom Lazarus, a WAHA resident to work on an original pedestal sink Tom had in his West Adams home. Tom had contacted all the usual



plumbing suspects (Adee, Rotor Rooter, etc) to get the work done but as soon as he mentioned his desire to keep and use only original parts for the sink, they all politely refused the work. At Peggy King's suggestion, Tom contacted Jose and it began a beautiful relationship between WAHA and Davidson Plumbing.

Jose finds the work to preserve and maintain original plumbing in West Adams homes very challenging and a lot of fun. As a result, Davidson specializes in repairing and restoring antique and original plumbing to

help the owner preserve the original integrity of the home.

Jose and his team consistently find they confront 2 major issues when they embark on a mission to restore original plumbing and fixtures. The first is that it is increasingly difficult to find original parts. There are only a few local sources who remain with the expertise and ability to obtain original parts from. The second is California's AB1953 legislation that became effective on January 1, 2010. This law basically requires that any pipes, fixtures, fittings, solder and flux be lead free in systems that provide water for human consumption.

With those challenges in mind, give Davidson Plumbing serious consideration when you have a plumbing problem and the integrity of your home's preservation has to be maintained in the solution. Davidson Plumbing should be able to come

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Upcoming Events



Valentine's Tea Party

Saturday, February 13 2-4 PM.

At the home of the Hendersons 1660 W 25th St.

Please join us for afternoon tea, genteel conversation and tasty treats at the romantically decorated Henderson's Folly.

WAHA will provide scones and accessories, tea and spirited libations. You are invited to bring finger sandwiches or small sweets or savories to add to the tea table. If you wish, you might also bring a favorite cup and saucer.

Please RSVP to events@westadamsheritage.org by February 10th, so we can plan appropriately.

March 19 St Patrick's Celebration

April 17 Election Meeting.

Locations to be announced. Please contact events chair, Suzie Henderson, if you would like to host one of these events.



Newsletter Transition

Happy New Year, WAHA Members. Welcome to your first edition of the WAHA Matters Newsletter for 2016. We have some fairly ambitious plans, but there is one in particular that I wanted to share with you as we begin 2016.

Our major goal for this calendar year is to transition the Newsletter from the hardcopy document you've consistently received in the mail for years to one you are able to receive online via email. We plan to do this by allowing members who would prefer an electronic version of the Newsletter to opt in and receive it. The electronic version will have all the content of the paper copy and it will include some bonus features. First, the content in the electronic format will be in color. Second, you will be able to link to additional content contained in the WAHA website or other information sourced online. However, the greatest benefit is that this new format will be much less expensive for WAHA to provide this communication tool to members, saving thousands of dollars in print and mailing costs. The savings can be made available for the important preservation advocacy you count on us to provide. If you are interested in receiving the electronic format, please make sure you contact us to make sure we have your correct email address. There are 2 ways to contact us.

- 1. Contact the membership chairperson, Rina Rubenstein at membership@westadamsheritage.org.
- 2. Login to the westadamsheritage.org website, click to edit your profile and update your email address.

Again, Happy 2016 and we really look forward to your feedback on the new Newsletter format and content.

> <u>Newsletter Committee</u> John Patterson - Communications Chair communications@westadamsheritage.org

Reggie Jones - Publisher & Editor news@westadamsheritage.org

Suzanne Cooper - Layout

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WAHA—Creating Our Future by Preserving Our Past

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



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