

2001 S. Ninth

A Property Changing With Its Neighborhood



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A Tale of Two Cities: Urban Form and Society in Chicago and St. Louis

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The changes in use and form of properties often coincide with trends in the development of neighborhoods. Revealing the changes in the Menard neighborhood of Soulard, the property at 2001 S. Ninth and Allen Avenue has undergone many adaptive uses including a farm, a park, an ethnic social hall, an auto parts store, a soda factory, a roller rink, an electric rail parts manufacturing plant, and most recently, loft apartments. Despite these numerous uses, the original structure remains, providing relics of the past in both the interior and exterior of the building. More research into the building reveals its symbiotic relationship with variations in the makeup of the neighborhood since the 1800s. Soulard has experienced drastic transitions from a social and ethnic, working class neighborhood to a largely Americanized community that would later succumb to industry, blight, and finally revitalization. Along with these various stages of Soulard's maturity, the building at the corner of Allen Avenue and Ninth Street has undergone adjustments in use and form that correspond with the configuration of its neighborhood. Tracing back the history of 2001 S. Ninth leads to the discovery of how we can read the dynamics of a community through the built environment and its function within the neighborhood.

The ownership and location of the land surrounding 2001 S. Ninth in the 1800s determined that the property would enter the twentieth century as a social center of Soulard. William Russell purchased 76 acres just south of the Soulard estate in 1837 to be used as Crystal Springs Farm. In 1842, Russell's daughter Ann and her husband Thomas Allen (see fig. 1) moved into Russell's house, just northeast of Ninth and



Fig. 1: Portrait of Thomas Allen, Courtesy of Scharf's History of St. Louis City and County

Russell.¹ As Allen inherited Russell's estate, he sold off pieces of the land to be developed. The area around and including the house, between Menard Street, Allen Avenue, Russell Street and Ninth Street remained as open fields. Allen refused to sell this land until the early 1870s, perhaps because he wanted to keep the area around his house personal, or because he waited for a downtown transportation route to come to the area.² As streets around this block grew into busy, working class areas, Allen's holdout of the property caused the land to remain with natural grass, trees, and flowers, setting the stage for the land's later use as a central location for a park and social center.

After the Allens moved to Lucas Place and left their house in Soulard, their land served as an escape from the increasingly busy neighborhood streets. Hermann Bachmann and his family lived in the Russell house from 1860 – 1868, and leased from Allen the area around the house. Together with co-lessee and fellow brewer Frederick Stumpf, they ran the area as Union Park and Beer Garden, a place where residents of the neighborhood could socialize, celebrate their culture and escape from the busy streets. As Eric Sandweiss explains, in the area around the park “the street was a place where [people's] own lives intersected in unpredictable ways with those of others whom they might or might not know.” The serene park was surrounded by noisy streets dominated by “the pounding of horseshoes and the cries of a motley succession of vendors.”³ In accordance with Frederick Law Olmstead's views on public parks, Union Park provided a contrast to the commercial street scenes, serving as a place for people to stroll amongst natural beauty and escape from the hustle bustle of the city.⁴

¹ Farber, Russell. “The Odyssey of 2001,” *The Soulard Renaissance*, Volume XXIV, Issue 1, Mardi Gras 1999. March 17, 2003, <http://www.soulard.com/renaissance/mardi99/2001.html>, 1.

² Sandweiss, Eric. *St. Louis: The Evolution of an American Urban Landscape*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001, 100.

³ Sandweiss, 101.

⁴ Olmsted, Frederick Law. “Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns,” *American Social Science Association*, 1870, 343.

In addition to the park's importance as an escape from commerce, Union Park played a significant role in the celebration of German identity in the Soulard neighborhood. In his translated accounts of The German Element in St. Louis, Ernst D. Kargau provides an excellent description of Union Park and its importance to the German population:

In South St. Louis, Union Park was superior to all gardens, when it came to concert gardens, during the sixties...Even on hot afternoons the many old trees gave ample shade. Beautiful flower beds were placed in various places and the terraced, nicely sodded slope dipped toward Ninth Street. From May to October there were concerts here on every Sunday and also during the week. These orchestras and bands played here – Sauter's, Kellermann's, Waldauer's and Vogel's. Union Park was always preferred by lodges and societies. Many of them held their festivals in this park. At Pentecost and on the Fourth of July the place was congested during the afternoon and evening.⁵

Approximately in 1871, the construction of Union Capitol Hall at the northeast corner of the park expanded upon the social possibilities of Union Park. Mixing a large, corner building at 2001 S. Ninth into the park (see fig. 2), the owners and managers began a new era for a site of ethnic social gatherings while the park itself decreased in popularity beginning in the 1870s.

The architectural structure of Union Capitol Hall offered social refuge and indoor entertainment for the immigrant populations of Soulard. In contrast to the open grounds of the rest of Union Park, the immense two story enclosed brick and wood structure spanned 7811 square ft, with dimensions of 120' x 142' 2". The first floor of the building included sections to be used for dining halls, clubrooms and a



Fig 2: 1875 Compton and Dry Pictorial View of Union Park and Union Capitol Hall

⁵ Kargau, Ernst D. The German Element in St. Louis. Trans. William G. Bek. Ed. Don Heinrich Tolzmann. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co, 2000, 150-151..

tavern. Stairs provided access to the second floor. The large, open second floor with high, tin covered ceilings presented the perfect setting for a gymnastic auditorium. Dressing rooms and a stage surrounded by a tin arch along the eastern wall (see fig. 3) allowed for performances in front of a large audience, which sat in the third floor three-sided mezzanine on the western side of the auditorium.⁶ The structure of Union Capitol Hall enabled ethnic groups to congregate indoors and enjoy the entertainment opportunities that the building provided.



Fig 3: The second floor windows, stage and arch along the eastern wall

Uncertainty remains as to

the “Bohemian Gymnastic Association, Sokol” occupied the building at 2001 S. Ninth. In his article, which appeared in the St. Louis Home Magazine, John Riha explains how the Bohemians rented the building from 1875 and 1880, and purchased the structure in 1894 for \$6,700.⁷ Meanwhile, in an article for The Soulard Renaissance, Russell Farber does not discuss the date that the Bohemians first leased the building. However, he says that their first lease expired in 1887, the “German Turnverein” leased it from 1887 until 1894, and the “Bohemian Gymnastic Association, Sokol” began a thirteen year lease in 1894.⁸ Adding to the confusion of these sources, the Recorder of Deeds Office and Tax Assessor’s Office state that “Bohemian Gymnastic Association, Sokol” purchased the property from the heirs of Thomas Allen’s estate

⁶ Riha, John. “Still “Smile”ing in Soulard,” St. Louis Home Magazine. February 1985, 12.

Farber, 2.

⁷ Riha, 12.

⁸ Farber, 2

for \$9000 on January 19, 1900.⁹ Regardless of when the Bohemians or Germans used the building, between the time of its construction in 1871 and its vacancy in 1922, the property served as a central location for both ethnic groups to gather. I assume that the leasing of the building between 1871 and 1894 is uncertain, but the Bohemians leased the property from 1894 until 1900, and owned the property from 1900 until 1922.

2001 S. Ninth functioned as a place where Germans and Bohemians could unite and embrace their cultural heritages. Inside the “Telocvicna Jednota Sokol Bohemian Gymnasium” at 2001 S. Ninth, the Bohemian population furthered its cultural and intellectual development with ethnic plays, singing societies, a library, regular dances, Czech music and a Bohemian Day School of approximately 200 pupils. Also, members of the organization could exercise on rings, parallel bars, a sidehorse, and a longhorse.¹⁰ The hall satisfied the values of the increasingly Bohemian population and its Sokol St. Louis organization, which was “dedicated to the physical, mental and cultural advancement of its members, and the children who attend its gymnasiums.” The Sokol movement sought to form a “healthy, strong nation...with physically fit, mentally alert and culturally well-developed citizens”¹¹ Kargau explains a similar social functioning of the building for Germans, stating, “after a spacious hall had been built, there were also dances scheduled, and well attended concerts on Sunday afternoons in the winter.”¹² Both German and Bohemian immigrant citizens of Souard maintained their strong ethnic ties through the gymnastic opportunities offered inside the Gymnasium located at 2001 S. Ninth.

When the German immigrant population in Souard decreased, it stopped using the hall at 2001 S. Ninth. The decline in German population became evident in the 1910 census, as it

⁹ City of St. Louis Recorder of Deeds Office, Book 1538 pages 387-388, Recorded Document January 19, 1900. City of St. Louis Tax Assessor’s Office, Book 227, page 21, January 19, 1900.

¹⁰ Riha, 12.
Farber, 2.

¹¹ “What is Sokol St. Louis?” American Czech Educational Center. <http://www.geocities.com/~acec-stl/sokol/sokol-stl.htm>

¹² Kargau, 151.

lowered from two-thirds of the 1880 Soulard population to less than fifty percent in 1910.¹³ In 1871, Saints Peter and Paul Church constructed “Old Hall” for the German community at 816 Allen, less than one block away from Union Capitol Hall, which was constructed in the same year. While the German population used “Old Hall” for 34 years from 1871 – 1905, the Germans used 2001 S. 9th only for a short time period sometime between 1871 and 1894, at the latest.¹⁴ Perhaps the Germans stopped using 2001 S. Ninth because other institutions such as “Old Hall” offered similar and better opportunities for German social functions. The drastic change in German population between 1880 and 1910 also demonstrates that initially there may have been a demand for two German halls on the same block in the early 1870s, but when the population decreased, the two (or possibly more than two) German social centers in the Menard neighborhood exceeded the needs of the ethnic community. Changes in the ethnic makeup of Soulard probably led to the Germans’ terminating their lease of 2001 S. Ninth, which opened up its doors to the thriving “Bohemian Gymnastic Association, Sokol.”



Fig. 4: May 27, 1896 picture after St. Louis Cyclone, from NOAA Photo Library

The significance of the building to the Bohemian population is demonstrated by their continued occupancy of the gymnasium and the Sokol’s repairing and improvement of the structure after the 1896 St. ripped apart the eastern

¹³ Sandweiss, 107, 109

¹⁴ Blaser, Daniel. From his presentation on The Franklin Room, April 24, 2003

side of the building, destroyed much of its roof, demolished the stage on the second floor, and tore down the iron cupola located on the northeast corner of the roof (see fig. 4). Historic preservationist Karen Baxter, who recently researched the building and helped gain its recognition for federal and state tax credits, used the above picture of the cyclone damage to explain the architectural changes currently seen in the structure.¹⁵ In an interview, she detailed how the Sokol organization replaced the former hipped roof, common in late 1800 housing in Soulard, with a more supportive modern truss system, used in bridge technology. Although the Sokol organization chose not to replace the cupola, it did replace the stage and continued to use it for performances. To reconstruct the eastern wall, the Bohemians chose windows with larger and more modern glass, boasting their wealth as both an organization and a culture (see fig. 5).¹⁶ Besides repairing the building after the cyclone, The “Bohemian Gymnastic Association, Sokol” also improved the structure, demonstrating the indispensable use of the building to the Bohemian ethnic community at the turn of the century.

While 2001 S. Ninth played a significant role for the Bohemian community during its peak immigration period, the building shut its doors in 1922 as it became less vital of an institution for a declining Bohemian immigrant population.



Fig 5: February 2003 View of Eastern Side Reconstructed after 1896

¹⁵ <http://www.photolib.noaa.gov/historic/nws/wea00270.htm>

¹⁶ Baxter, Karen. Phone interview conducted April 22, 2003

According to Census reports that Sandweiss provides, Bohemians made up twenty percent of the Soulard population in 1880, and their presence increased to one-third of the total in 1910.¹⁷ The American Czech Educational Center asserts that the peak Czech immigration to the United States occurred in the 25 years between 1895 and 1920, which overlapped with the Bohemian occupancy of 2001 S. Ninth between 1894 and 1922.¹⁸ In 1922, the St. Louis Sokol “reconciled with associated fraternal organizations” and moved to the Bohemian National Hall at 1701 Allen, only 3 blocks away from 2001 S. Ninth. The Czecho-Slovak Protective Society built Bohemian National Hall in 1890, which served the Czech community until 1965.¹⁹ Similar to the German vacancy of 2001 S. Ninth, the Bohemian community used multiple social halls for at least 28 years, between 1894 and 1922, but then consolidated into one building when Bohemian immigrant population declined and demand decreased for their social halls. As the formerly social neighborhood Americanized in the 1920s, 2001 S. Ninth ended its era as an indoor social center for the ethnic Soulard immigrants.

In the late 1800s, the spatially undifferentiated architecture of the Menard neighborhood coincided with a social and ethnic population adjusting to American life. As mentioned before, in 1880, two-thirds of household heads were of German decent, 20 percent were Bohemian, 25 percent were American born, and about half were younger than the age of 35. Ninety percent worked as laborers, and most buildings housed members of similar ethnicity. The design of housing stock in Menard encouraged social interaction between neighbors and families, who often shared similar ethnicity. Houses in Menard were built very close together with little privacy and crowded interiors. Open porches and shared yards fostered the crossing of “separate paths and individual lives.”²⁰ In this time period, the immigrants of the Menard region knew their neighbors well and engaged in social activities together. In accordance with the

¹⁷ Sandweiss, 107, 109

¹⁸ “The Czecho-Slovak Migration to St. Louis”, <http://www.geocities.com/~acec-stl/sokol/stl.htm>

¹⁹ Farber, 2-3

architectural and social makeup of the neighborhood from 1880-1910, the gymnasium at 2001 S. Ninth thrived as a unifying indoor social hall from 1871 until 1922.

As the German and Bohemian immigrant populations both decreased as the neighborhood grew, the architectural and social transformation of the Menard community reflected the dwindling use of social institutions in the area. Sandweiss explains that between 1880 and 1910, the Menard population became more ethnically diverse, and the American-born citizens increased to about half of the population from just 25 percent by 1910. Meanwhile, household heads were increasingly female, the median household head age grew from 38 in 1880 to 44 in 1900, and the vocational profile of manual labor in the area shifted from 90 percent in 1880 to around 50 percent in 1910. These statistical changes in the identity of Menard coincided with a change in family structure and living space, as “households consisted of smaller but more extended groups, and they were less likely than they had been previously to include working parents or school-aged children.” While the social structure of Menard changed, people often remodeled their homes to include walled off porches, electricity and plumbing, all of which contributed to, “more clearly drawn lines between one dwelling unit and the next.” The modifications in architecture and changes in the identity of Menard’s population reveal how people tended to live more privately by 1910. Private lifestyles point to a less unified community. This community lost its social grounds at Union Park to houses after Allen’s widow died in 1897, and lost its gymnasium at the park’s corner to commerce and industry after 1922.²¹

Between 1922 and 1926, the spacious building at 2001 S. Ninth designed for social functions faced its first adjustment to commerce. The President of “Bohemian Gymnastic Association, Sokol,” William Winner, and Charles F. Jerabek, member of the association’s Board of Directors, transferred the property to Beatrice Ann Realty Company in consideration of

²⁰ Sandweiss, 107.

²¹ Sandweiss, 107-111

\$100 on August 11, 1922.²² From 1924-1926, the St. Louis City Directory lists 2001 S. Ninth as “Allen Auto Parts.”²³ However, no other sources confirm that the building served as an auto parts store. Architectural evidence from recent renovations shows that the southern wall on the first floor used to have doors wide enough for a horse and wagon to enter the building, which would have well suited the cars repaired in an auto parts store.²⁴ Assuming the validity of the City Directory, the building adapted to the popularity of the automobile for a short time during the roaring twenties, but the business failed after two years. Perhaps an auto parts store was not the most profitable or appropriate choice for Beatrice Ann Realty Company to place in the heart of the walking neighborhood of Soulard.

After a year of vacancy in 1927, the building converted once again, from a commercial auto parts store to an industrial soda factory.²⁵ The property changed hands from Beatrice Ann Realty trustee Jesse T. Friday to Joseph L. Rehme, who bid highest with \$5000 at an auction on September 14, 1926.²⁶ As Second Vice President of the Lafayette South Side Bank of St. Louis, Rehme transferred the property to the bank in a \$10 quit claim on September 14, 1926.²⁷ Then the bank transferred the property again to William F. Cox in consideration of \$100 on October 29, 1926.²⁸ Cox and his wife Hettie M. turned the vacant building into the “Orange Smile Syrup Company,” referred to as “Bottling Works” on the Sandborn Map.²⁹

William F. Cox entered the soda industry at just the right time and in the right location. Orange Smile Syrup Company opened in Soulard right before the 1929 peak in the U.S. soda

²² St. Louis Recorder of Deeds Office, Book 3703 page 63

²³ Gould’s St. Louis City Directory, 1922-1926

²⁴ Baxter, Karen

²⁵ Gould’s St. Louis City Directory, 1927-1968

²⁶ St. Louis Recorder of Deeds Office, Deed Signed August 21, 1926, Book 4531, Page 30
St. Louis Tax Assessor’s Office, September 14, 1926, Book 708, Page 83

²⁷ St. Louis Recorder of Deeds Office, Deed Signed September 16, 1926, Book 4535, Page 141
St. Louis Tax Assessor’s Office, September 14, 1926, Book 708, Page 83
Gould’s St. Louis City Directory, 1926

²⁸ St. Louis Recorder of Deeds Office, Deed Signed October 27, 1926, Book 4540, Page 310
St. Louis Tax Assessor’s Office, October 29, 1926, Book 715, Page 14

²⁹ Insurance Maps of St. Louis, Missouri. Volume 4, Box 1. New York: The Sanborn Map Company, 1937, 23.

industry. The factory survived for nearly 35 years as a small soda manufacturer, despite the Great Depression and changes in production that gave more control to large soda plants.³⁰ In 1937, Missouri was one of the top ten soda producing states, and the 1930 St. Louis Manufacturing Census explains how there were seventeen establishments manufacturing \$2,892,097.54 of carbonated beverages during that year.³¹ The St. Louis beverage industry included Orange Smile Syrup Company's "Buster Cola," "Cheer-Up Soft Drink" and "Smile Orange Drink."³² Smile's beverages were part of a national chain that operated at least in St. Louis and Tennessee, as Smile memorabilia was found from "Cheer Up-Doughboy Bottlers Inc."



Fig. 6: 10 oz. bottle from Cheer-Up Doughboy Bottlers Inc., Kingsport TN

in Kingsport, Tennessee (see figs 6).³³ In 1928 there were four other companies in St. Louis that advertised in the Greater St. Louis Telephone Directory and also bottled the same drinks as at 2001 S. Ninth.³⁴ Just five blocks away at 1326 Ann Avenue, "American Soda Water Company" bottled "Smile" and "Cheer Up," promoting these beverages, and many others. The proximity of American Soda Water Company and the booming Missouri soda industry suggest that Orange Smile Syrup Company was a popular employment opportunity in Soulard until the early 1960s, and that Smile's soda was commonly drunk in St. Louis.

In order to successfully manufacture soda for over thirty years in the former social hall, William F. Cox altered

³⁰ <http://www.bottlebooks.com/ACL%201937/Soda%20in%201937.htm>

³¹ The Commonwealth of Missouri 51st & 52nd Annual Reports of the Labor & Industrial Inspection Department November 5, 1929 to November 5, 1931. p. 14

³² Riha, 12

³³ <http://www.angelfire.com/tn/traderz/smile.html>

³⁴ Greater St. Louis Telephone Directory, December 1928, February 1947

the interior and exterior of the building. He most likely added offices to the eastern side of the first floor and manufactured the soda on the second floor.³⁵ Most of the changes in the first floor architecture that can be seen today were probably made by Cox, especially the addition of a post-19th century curved brick wall that splits the first floor into two sides.³⁶ Cox also added an elevator, seen on the 1937 Sanborn Map, to transport equipment and products between the first and the second floor.³⁷ The St. Louis Building Department recorded the additions of two hot air furnaces and a “brick factory” for \$1500 in 1927, and the altering of the three-story “brick factory” for \$300 in 1942. Shortly after opening the factory, Cox added color tile advertisements of “Drink Cheer Up, Made Good for You” and “Drink Smile, Refresh with a Smile” on the lower exterior of the northern and eastern facades of the



Fig. 7: Header of landmarks, including tile advertisements at www.stlouis.com

building. These advertisements kept the once popular ethnic social center as a vibrant landmark of Souard even until today, as exemplified by the inclusion of the Cheer Up tile advertisement in the header of <http://www.stlouis.com>, an online visitor’s city guide to St. Louis (see fig. 7). At the time, the tiles also encouraged people to purchase the drinks, and perhaps enticed Souard residents to work for the company. These architectural changes helped the soda business thrive until the early 1960s

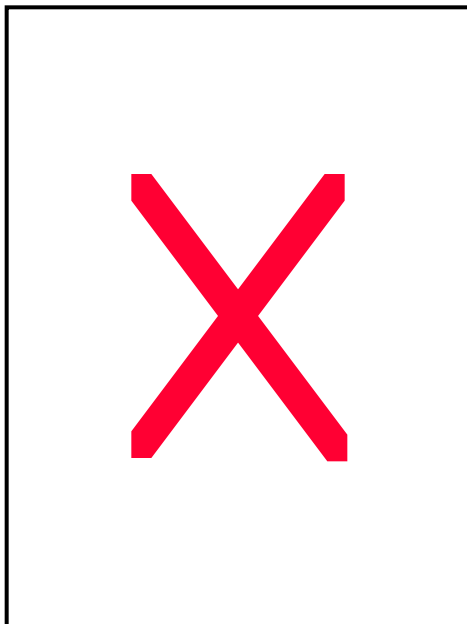
³⁵ On Site interview with Matt Librach of MBL Realty Corporation and Patrick McLain of J.P. McLain Inc. 3/28/2003

³⁶ Baxter, Karen

³⁷ Sanborn Map, 23
Baxter, Karen

Despite these structural alterations, Cox kept many of the original forms of the interior and exterior architecture of the ethnic building.³⁸ The stage, the tin arch around it, and the three-sided mezzanine all remained on the second floor. Ornate cast iron poles continued to support the second floor. While the open auditorium of the second floor probably housed the manufacturing equipment, the east and west sides of the room remained in their original structure as a reminder of the building's rich ethnic past. Aside from the addition of the tiles, the exterior's appearance stayed roughly the same since the 1896 St. Louis Cyclone repairs. While 2001 S. Ninth drastically changed in its use from a German and Bohemian ethnic social center to an industrial soda factory, Cox preserved the energy and culture of the ethnic past inside the walls of the old Union Capitol Hall.

In the early 1960s, the building entered a short-lived social reincarnation as a roller rink as an attempt to revitalize attention towards the building and return to its original roots as a



*Fig. 8: Third floor mezzanine, where audience watched performances, and onlookers later watched roller skaters.
Also Seen: Elevator Shaft*

neighborhood social center. On July 28, 1959, William Cox's adopted daughter, Martha Frances Cox Webb (Jackson), inherited the property from her father, who died on December 19, 1953. Conceivably, the business was not profiting well, as only American Soda Water Co. advertised for Smile in 1947 and no bottlers in St. Louis advertised for Smile by 1964. Seeing the business fail as large soda plants took control over the industry, Martha likely thought that the spacious second floor could house a roller rink, which had boomed in the 1940s and 1950s across America.³⁹ While skaters enjoyed the rink and

³⁸ Gould's St. Louis City Directory, 1952

³⁹ http://www.rollerskatingmuseum.com/museum/990421_exhibition.htm

watching others skate from the mezzanine (See fig. 8), the business closed its doors rather quickly, as City Directories listed 2001 S. Ninth as a vacant property from 1966-1968. The ill-fated roller rink reveals that 2001 S. Ninth and the Soulard neighborhood had left its primarily ethnically social roots nearly 40 years earlier; a return to the building's former purpose was inappropriate for the contemporary culture.

During most of Smile's tenure at 2001 S. Ninth, less than a mile away at 2215 De Kalb, "Powercraft Corporation" was manufacturing electric railway parts since 1937.⁴⁰ Listed under "Electrical Equipment Manufacturers" in telephone directories, Powercraft produced "power switching equipment and connectors, bus supports and clamps, pipe frame fittings and spool insulator supports."⁴¹ As Kosciusko Industrial Park developed in the 1960s, Monsanto bought out Powercraft and replaced its building and many others with a super block of chemical plants. While heavy industry crept into the eastern edge of Soulard at the Kosciusko Industrial Park, smaller industrial businesses such as Powercraft Corporation were forced to relocate. Powercraft chose to move into 2001 S. Ninth, purchasing the property from Martha Frances Cox Webb (Jackson) on July 27, 1967.⁴² The sturdy floors, designed to support the weight of hundreds who attended the German and Bohemian dances and performances, would now support the heavy weight of boxes and machinery for the next 26 years.

While Powercraft kept 2001 S. Ninth alive with the energy of its machines, the Soulard neighborhood faced terrible conditions. The mass industrialization of St. Louis in the 1950s and 1960s demanded low skilled labor, which attracted poorer immigrants, whites, and African Americans, all with lesser educations.⁴³ This poorer and less educated population neglected the Soulard neighborhood, and numerous abandoned and burned-out properties lined the trash-filled streets in the 1970s. The neglect and decay of the neighborhood affected the social makeup of

⁴⁰ Gould's St. Louis City Directory, 1936 - 1969

⁴¹ Greater St. Louis Telephone Directory, August, 1980

⁴² St. Louis Tax Assessor's Office, July 27, 1967

Soulard, as “a cheerful ‘good morning’ or a ‘good afternoon’ to a passerby often elicited no response.”⁴⁴ The rise in heavy industry compounded with a change in Soulard’s population extended the neglect and decay of the neighborhood. Meanwhile, the existence of Powercraft at 2001 S. Ninth from 1967 until 1993 helps us read the built environment of Soulard to have faced blight and a poorer population that gave way to the dominance of heavy industry in parts of the neighborhood.

In the 1970s, residents of Soulard started to gradually revitalize the deteriorating neighborhood. The government placed Soulard on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972, and designated Soulard to be a “Historic District of St. Louis” in 1975. Some Soulard residents and the “Soulard Restoration Group” began an intensive marketing campaign, advertising the neighborhood that was “making a comeback” as a “unique place to live.”⁴⁵ Unlike many other areas of St. Louis, grass roots efforts to improve Soulard have succeeded in bringing the neighborhood back to form. The improvements since the 1970s led to the neighborhood’s currently flourishing real estate market.

As revitalization efforts began, Powercraft’s enterprise suffered. Throughout the 1980s the ideas of reusing 2001 S. Ninth as “stately apartments, commercial offices, spas, handball courts or a health food restaurant” were introduced.⁴⁶ Engineer Oreon Sandler purchased Powercraft on June 24, 1984, anticipating another relocation of the business.⁴⁷ He also considered similar alternatives for reuse, in addition to possibly reusing the property for its original use: as a meeting hall or entertainment center.⁴⁸ Despite all of these talks and continued poor performance, Powercraft remained open until December 30, 1993, when the U.S. Small Business Administration took over the property for \$15,000 and left the property available to

⁴³ <http://www.rppi.org/urban/ps264.html>

⁴⁴ <http://stlouis.missouri.org/soulard/steps2problem.html>

⁴⁵ <http://stlouis.missouri.org/soulard/steps4solution.html>

⁴⁶ Riha, 12

⁴⁷ St. Louis Tax Assessor’s Office, Book 1657, Page 451

purchase. For the past two decades, various developers have contemplated viable alternatives for the property, but none have followed through with their plans until recent years.

Since Powercraft closed its doors at 2001 S. Ninth, the building has sat vacant, waiting to be reused, while other properties in Soulard were rapidly sold off and revitalized. When Powercraft tried selling the property in the late 1980s for \$500,000, developer and real estate speculator Peter Rothschild offered a purchasing price of only \$200,000, too low for Powercraft to accept. By 1994, the building suffered from leaks and holes in the roof. Because of this damage, Rothschild purchased the building at a low price of \$1,500 on April 19, 1994, from the U.S. Small Business Administration (see fig. 9).⁴⁹ A few months after he purchased the building, Rothschild repaired the roof at a cost of \$21,000. Additionally, he completed \$20,000 of exterior alterations at the end of 1996, and \$175,000 of interior and exterior alterations from October, 2001 through November, 2002.⁵⁰ Finally, after nearly two decades of interest and investment in the property, Rothschild began a project in early 2002 to transform the historic building into loft apartments with the cooperation of Matt Librach (MBL Realty Corp.) and Patrick McClain (J.P. McClain Inc). As many other buildings in Soulard have been restored and resold at values of upwards of \$300,000, the developers hope that 2001 S. Ninth will succeed as a new place of residence in a growing community.

Perhaps the building will remain as loft apartments for years to come in the future, expressing what could be a continued period of revitalization and rapid neighborhood growth.



*Fig. 9: Rothschild Inspecting Building,
Courtesy of Riverfront Times*

⁴⁸ Farber, 3

⁴⁹ <http://www.riverfronttimes.com/issues/2001-12-12/feature.html/print.html>

⁵⁰ St. Louis Building Permit Department

Although the building will undergo its most extensive architectural changes since the 1896 St. Louis Cyclone repairs, 2001 S. Ninth will continue to capture the historic trends of Soulard's past. Supported by state and federal historic tax credits, Librach and McClain are in the early stages of a \$3 million project to convert the building into eighteen loft apartments and a first floor office. Although the mezzanine will be torn down due to structural instability, most of the other architectural relics will be restored to their original form and exposed to the future residents and visitors of the building.⁵¹ While the use of the building once again will drastically change, the spirit of an ethnic social hall, soda factory and other interim uses will persist through the contemporary architectural renovation of 2001 S. Ninth.⁵²

After 132 years and approximately seven different functions, the structure of the original Union Capitol Hall acts as a reminder of Menard's evolution as a neighborhood in Soulard. While the architecture remains relatively consistent with the past, the use of the property has altered with each major shift in the neighborhood's makeup. Incredibly, each occupant of the building has preserved the architecture of the past while contributing to it with changes, including elevators, offices, brick walls, bricked-in windows, and tile advertisements. The neighborhood has transformed from a primarily social and ethnic area, to an Americanized neighborhood, then to a blighted region supported by heavy industry, and finally to a neighborhood benefiting from revitalization. Long-lasting functions of 2001 S. Ninth clearly coincide with these neighborhood trends. However, other uses, such as Allen Auto Parts and a roller rink reveal how property owners misconstrued the direction of the neighborhood, and brought potentially successful businesses to an inappropriate place during the wrong times. As the Soulard area continues its stage of revitalization, Rothschild Development hopes that the loft apartments will function well with the neighborhood, as have many other uses of the structure.

⁵¹ See Appendix 1 for pictures and descriptions of the developers' renovation efforts

⁵² On Site interview with Matt Librach of MBL Realty Corporation and Patrick McLain of J.P. McLain Inc. 3/28/2003

The history of the adaptive reuse of 2001 S. Ninth and its relation to the evolution of Soulard identifies the symbiotic relationship that properties can have with their changing environments.