

ARCHITECTURE COLUMN

Designs big, small win awards

BY EDWARD GUNTS
[SUN ARCHITECTURE CRITIC]

Ten years ago, St. Athanasius Chapel in Curtis Bay appeared destined for the wrecking ball, after the Archdiocese of Baltimore closed it out of concerns that the 1891 building was structurally unsound.

But today, the chapel is once again a meeting place for the parish and surrounding community after a new pastor, Father Robert DiMattei, arrived in 2005 and decided it could be restored for continued use.

The tiny, Gothic Revival building was renovated inside and out, including its exterior masonry and colored glass windows, and stands as a landmark for the Curtis Bay community.

"Baltimore is famous for its monumental churches, but these modest buildings, in a sense, are just as important because they form the fabric of the city that makes the other buildings possible," said architect Michael Murphy of Murphy & Dittenhafer, the architectural firm that worked with Bon Contracting on the \$700,000 chapel restoration.

While major projects such as renovation of the Basilica of the Assumption highlight Baltimore's importance in the history of American Catholicism, Murphy said, "the restoration of the simple Chapel of St. Athanasius tells the equally important story of a very modest, immigrant, working-class community on Baltimore's waterfront."

The chapel is one of 12 restoration, renovation and adaptive reuse projects that will receive a historic preservation award Thursday from Baltimore Heritage. The annual awards provide a chance to take stock of the preservation scene around Baltimore. To be eligible for consideration, projects had to be completed by Jan. 1.

"Every year I worry that we're going to run out of buildings to honor, and every year I'm proven wrong," said Johns Hopkins, executive director of Baltimore Heritage. "This year we have as broad a range of award winners as I've ever seen."

The winners include several high-profile restorations such as the former Mount Royal train station, now academic space for the

Maryland Institute College of Art, and Baltimore's expanded School for the Arts on Cathedral Street.

In some cases, Baltimore Heritage is recognizing projects in which the owner did much more than necessary to preserve a structure, such as the painstaking restorations of Davidge Hall on West Lombard Street, the Washington Place apartments on North Charles Street, and the drawing room of the Garrett-Jacobs mansion.

Other projects are recognized because they took years to complete and included dozens of buildings, including the renovations of store facades in the 1700 and 1800 blocks of Pennsylvania Ave. and 31 rowhouses in Reservoir Hill.

The list also includes several cases in which an old structure has been adapted for new uses, including the Railway Express building at 1501 St. Paul St., a former parcel post station converted to commercial and residential lofts; and the St. James Apartments at 301 W. Franklin St.

Two individuals will be honored at the event. Baltimore attorney and former state Sen. Julian Lapidus, who served as Baltimore Heritage's president from 2004 to this month, will receive the Douglas Gordon Lifetime Achievement Award. Jeff Jerome, curator of the Edgar Allan Poe House at 203 N. Amity St. for 30 years, will receive a preservation honor award. Will Backstrom of PNC Bank will become the organization's new president effective Thursday.

During Lapidus' tenure, Baltimore Heritage launched a campaign to create an endowment of \$100,000 to support its mission and has raised nearly \$90,000. It also built up its membership to more than 1,000 people.

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2008 AWARD WINNERS

- St. James Apartments at 301 W. Franklin St. (Kington Commercial, owner; Hord Coplan Macht, architect; Southway Builders,



contractor)

- Baltimore School for the Arts expansion, 712 Cathedral St. (Baltimore School for the Arts Foundation, owner and developer; Cho Benn Holback + Associates, architect; Whiting-Turner Contracting Co. and **Banks Contracting Inc.** contractors)

- Mount Royal Station, 1300 Mount Royal Ave. (Maryland Institute College of Art, owner; GWWO, architect; and Whiting-Turner Contracting Co., contractor)

- Railway Express, 1501 St. Paul St. (Railway Express LLC, owner; Hord Coplan Macht, architect; Doracon Contracting and Banks Contracting, general contractors, the Azola Companies, historic

preservation and project management)

- 300 W. Fayette St. (Kevin F. Donohoe Co. Inc. owner; Kann Partners, architect; Southway Builders, contractor)

- Washington Place Apartments, 700 N. Charles St. (Washington Park Co., owner; David H. Gleason Associates, architect; Structural Restoration Services, contractor)

- Pennsylvania Avenue Facade Improvement Project Phase I, 1700 and 1800 blocks of Pennsylvania Ave. (Baltimore Development Corp., owner and developer; David H. Gleason Associates, architect; Housing Authority of Baltimore City, contractor)

- Davidge Hall, 522 W. Lombard St. (University of Maryland Medical Center, owner; John G. Waite Associates, architect; Structural Preservation Systems, contractor)

- St. Athanasius Chapel, 4708 Prudence St. (St. Athanasius Church, owner; Murphy & Dittenhafer, architect; Bon Contracting, contractor)

- 4 West Read Street apartments, 4 W. Read St. (Douglas Clemens and Charles Morton, owners; CL Design Studio, architect; Soper Built Woodworks LLC, contractor)

- Renaissance at Reservoir Hill,

31 sites in Reservoir Hill (Reservoir Hill Housing LLC, owner; Cho Benn Holback, architect; Southway Builders, contractor)

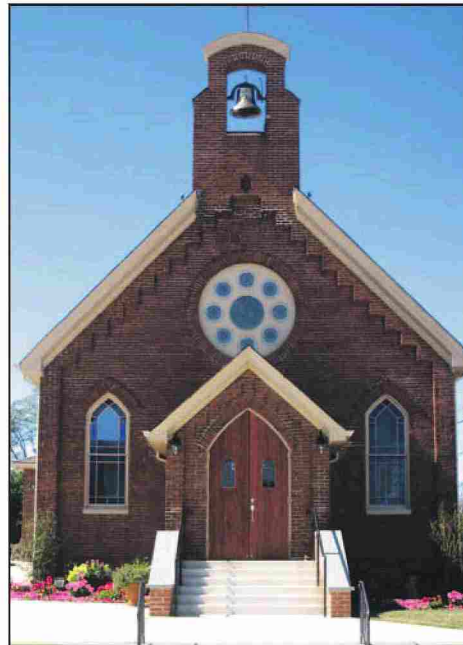
- Drawing Room at the Garrett-Jacobs Mansion, 11 W. Mount Vernon Place (The Engineering Society of Baltimore, owner; Johnson Berman Architecture and Interior Design and SMG Architects, designers; Thomas Moore Studios, Artifacts Ltd., Wilhide Draperies and Whiting-Turner Contracting Co., contractors)

>>>IF YOU GO Baltimore Heritage 2008 Historic Preservation Awards will be held at 6 p.m. Thursday at the Garrett-Jacobs Mansion, 11 W. Mount Vernon Place. For tickets, call 410-332-9992.



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The small St. Athanasius Chapel in Curtis Bay has been restored to use.

[MURPHY & DITTENHAFER]