

10 Most Endangered Historic Places

2010

Preservation Alliance of Minnesota ❖ www.mnpreservation.org



Built in 1905, the Samuel J. Hewson House is currently vacant, a victim of the recent foreclosure crisis. While the exterior of the home serves as a reminder of the Whittier neighborhood's past grandeur, the true jewel is the elaborate interior decoration, which is particularly vulnerable to theft or subject to being stripped and sold piecemeal. The house was designed by prominent Minneapolis architects Kees and Colburn, with interior decoration by John S. Bradstreet, the pre-eminent local artisan and furniture designer of the Arts and Crafts period. Contractor Theron P. Healy formed the third leg of the accomplished triumvirate responsible for the Hewson House construction, adding to the significance of this local landmark.

Numerous threats face the Samuel J. Hewson House as a consequence of its foreclosure. Vacancy in and of itself is a

serious issue for this home; the longer the house remains empty, the more likely it is that damage will occur, whether by water infiltration, theft, or neglect. Market pressures and zoning changes in the Whittier neighborhood have caused many similar homes to be rezoned as multiple-family units or for commercial use; apartments, condos, offices, and group homes are prevalent in former mansions throughout the area.

In the summer of 2009, the threats to the Hewson House became known to the greater community as the then-owners, facing foreclosure, attempted to strip the interior of the home and sell the parts at an estate sale. The Whittier Alliance intervened, and the impressive interior, with Bradstreet's signature handcrafted and artistic fixtures, pulls, fire screens, and inlaid ornament, remains largely intact. At the request of Councilmember Robert Lilligren, the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission recently took steps to designate the Hewson House as a Minneapolis landmark, establishing interim protection while the designation study is being prepared. But for the Hewson House to be truly protected, it will require a new owner who will invest in its interior and exterior preservation, while bringing to it a compatible use.

Action Steps

1. Buy the house and invest in its rehabilitation and restoration of its interior decoration.
2. Familiarize yourself with the significance of the designer, architect, and contractor.
3. Work to involve groups that might have an interest in seeing the interior restored, such as the local chapter of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID).
www.asidmn.org/
4. Support the Whittier Alliance, Preserve Minneapolis, Minneapolis Historic Homeowners Association, and other groups that advocate for preserving historic properties in Minneapolis. www.whittieralliance.org/ www.preserveminneapolis.org

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Samuel J. Hewson House