

Third Street is Focus of Preservation Week

By David J. Morrison

Harrisburg has a number of prominent, if not world-famous streets. Front Street, with its elegant mansions and panoramic river views is memorialized in John O'Hara's classic novel, "A Rage to Live." Second Street is enjoying attention these days as the trendy "Restaurant Row."

But Harrisburg's true "main street" is Third Street. It boasts the nation's grandest state capitol, museums, cultural attractions, historic office buildings, religious landmarks, destination and neighborhood shopping, historic and 21st-century residential neighborhoods, parks, architectural treasures and the oldest farmer's market in the country. Harrisburg's grand hotels of yesteryear rolled red carpets to Third Street, as did the world-renowned Mary Sachs fashion emporium.

In 1995, the Commonwealth bestowed main-street status on Third Street, funding the Midtown Market District retail revitalization program, which in turn established the acclaimed Midtown Cinema. Third Street has always been a unique artery of urban life, connecting Center City and the Capitol Complex to Midtown, Uptown and other neighborhoods.

Third Street is a pedestrian-friendly, traditional two-way urban street, with a continuous streetscape of human-scale buildings and amenities. It has a rich array of historic districts, National Register historic properties and award-winning historic preservation projects. It has significant 20th-Century and modern landmarks, including Whitaker Center, Strawberry Square, the State Museum, the Zembo Mosque and Italian Lake. It has regular bus service.

Third Street is where HHA was founded (the State Museum) in 1973, and it is where we are headquartered 30 years later (the Resource Center).

To showcase Third Street's many features, its rich heritage and its unsurpassed importance to the city fabric, HHA made it the theme of our 2003 Preservation Week observance. Narrated trolley tours running its full length were provided, and a new exhibit, "the Third Street Capital Corridor," prepared for HHA by Jeb Stuart, special consultant to the City of Harrisburg and past HHA board member, was unveiled.

The new exhibit will be used to help educate the public about the many amenities and landmarks along Third Street. Future plans include additional guided tours, collaborative events with Third Street merchants and institutions and a possible brochure highlighting Third Street history and attractions. The exhibit depicts some of the landmarks, neighborhoods and resources which are part of the Third Street Capital Corridor from Chestnut Street to Division Street. The corridor is "a distinct and unifying vertebrae of culture, history and revitalization," says Stuart, who provided the following descriptions of Third Street sites and landmarks:

OLD SALEM CHURCH* – *231 Chestnut Street*. Oldest church building in the city having been erected in 1822 by the German Reformed congregation on land designated for a church building by the original 1785 plan of Harrisburg. Building was able to survive surrounding redevelopment activities of the 1960's.

OLD DOWNTOWN HARRISBURG NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT – *S. Third Street, 300 Block of Chestnut Street, first Block of N. Third Street, 300 Block of Market Street*. Contains the last vestiges of turn-of-the-century

Center City including Phase II of Strawberry Square. Interesting cityscape contrasts between older lower scale development and contemporary downtown high-rises.

SUSQUEHANNA ART MUSEUM – *301 Market Street*. Upscale museum occupying the first three floors of the historic Kunkel Building featuring internationally-recognized artists and which also includes the Doshi Gallery for Contemporary Art. Cutting-edge design resulting in unique vertical spaces and floor plan created in 2000.

WHITAKER CENTER FOR SCIENCE AND THE ARTS – *Third and Market Streets*. First center of its kind in the U.S. where education, science and the performing arts take place under one roof. This 130,000 sq. ft., \$52.7 Million complex completed in 1999 contains the dazzling Sunoco Performance Theater, the state-of-the-art and interactive Science Center, and the technologically advanced IMAXr Theater with six-story screen. Stunning exterior design and lighting emanating from downtown like a polished gem.

STRAWBERRY SQUARE PHASE II – *N. Third and Market Streets* (1843-1940; renovated 1989). Expansion of Strawberry Square Phase I into thirteen 19th and early 20th Century historic structures comprising a half city block. Two former streets glassed-over and converted to walkway atriums.

STRAWBERRY SQUARE PHASE I – *N. Third and Walnut Streets*. First major complex completed in 1977 through downtown revitalization. Known for unusual specialty retail shops, full-variety food court and crisp

contemporary styling. Large central atrium with kinetic clock hosts art shows and events. Upper towers house offices.

MAIN STATE CAPITOL BUILDING* – *Third and State Streets*. Completed and dedicated by president Theodore Roosevelt in 1906 and architecturally inspired by St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, many consider this pinnacle of the Commonwealth as the finest state capitol building in the United States. The brilliantly restored rotunda and Senate and House of Representative Chambers are particularly exquisite spaces adorned with marble, murals, gold leaf and stained glass.

STATE MUSEUM OF PENNSYLVANIA AND THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE ARCHIVES – *N. Third and North Streets*. Completed in 1964 as the Commonwealth's official and principal depository of records, artifacts and wide variety of treasures illustrating Pennsylvania's rich heritage. Architecturally inspired by the Trylon and Perisphere icons of the 1939 New York Worlds Fair.

HISTORIC MIDTOWN MARKET DISTRICT – *N. Third Street from Forster to Reily Streets*. Revitalizing and historic neighborhood shopping district featuring art galleries, boutiques and upbeat restaurants and pubs accented by period street lights and anchored by the Broad Street Market. Live entertainment and unusual merchandise offerings bring diversity to city living.

HISTORIC HARRISBURG RESOURCE CENTER – *1230 N. Third Street*. 1890's former bank building designed in the Brownstone Romanesque Style. Converted in 1993 to the headquarters of the City's leading

historic preservation organization and site of special events and art exhibits. Original banking features including vaults and marble counters retained and preserved.

BROAD STREET MARKET* – *N. Third and Verbeke Streets*. Oldest continuously operated market house in the United States. Front, stone market dates to 1863. Restored in the mid-1990's to include period windows, doors, upscale signage and banners and central landscaped plaza for special events and performances. Rear brick market erected in 1878. The complex is now the anchor to the Historic Midtown Market District. The Market offers fresh produce and features a diversified mix of vendors and delicacies

CAPITOL HEIGHTS – *N. Third Street between Harris and Kelker Streets*. Full-complimented newly constructed townhouse neighborhood which emulates and blends with the adjacent Old Uptown Historic District. Features antique-styled streetlights and new curbs and sidewalks.

OLD UPTOWN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT - *Reily to Maclay Streets and N. Second to N. Third Streets*. Large Queen Anne and Italianate-architecturally styled neighborhood once representing the northern frontier of the city's development. Marvelously true to its original appearance.

COTTAGE RIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD - *N. Third Street between Peffer and Emerald Streets*. Stylish Queen Anne series of homes developed by William Howard Eby in the mid 1880's to 1900 as a premier location to view the Susquehanna River prior to the filling in of swamp land

west of N. Third Street and the development of that portion of Uptown Harrisburg.

OUR LADY OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT CHURCH – *N. Third and Woodbine Streets*. Dedicated in 1930 and fine example of the Gothic Revival architectural style. Designed by Lock, Weber and Bower of Pittsburgh and Bernard E. Starr of Harrisburg who also designed Bishop McDevitt High School.

PENN CENTER HARRISBURG (formerly the main Polyclinic Hospital Complex). – *N. Third Street at Polyclinic Avenue*. Conversion of the old hospital, with original portions dating to 1925, into a "smart" state-of-the-art conference center in 290,000 square feet on 7 acres. Phased occupancy to be completed by early 2005.

ZEMBO SHRINE TEMPLE – *N. Third and Division Streets*. Mosque of the Harrisburg area Shriner organization. Elaborate mid-eastern design elements highlighted by massive tower reminiscent of a minaret. Spectacular interior. Large auditorium hosts numerous entertainment activities and famous personalities.

ITALIAN LAKE – *N. Third and Division Streets*. Baroque park setting paradise around a manmade lake reclaimed from a swamp in the 1930's. Lake spanned by the picturesque Italian Bridge and accented by the "Dance of the Eternal Spring" centerpiece sculpture. Both southern and northern lakes thoroughly upgraded and stabilized including enhancement of surrounding gardens and installation of period lighting.

* Individually listed in the National Register for Historic Places