

Reading the Accidental Archive

Architecture, Ephemera, and Landscape as Evidence of an Urban Public Culture

Joseph Heathcott

This article examines the ephemeral rubbish of one middle-class family in early twentieth-century St. Louis, the interior and exterior design of their home, and the broader social and physical landscape they inhabited. The author treats this interrelated set of artifacts, lying in repose at varied scales, as evidence of ongoing transformations in urban public culture in the American city from the 1890s through the 1920s. While the middle class increasingly defined urban public culture through their social performance, civic participation, and commercial connectivity, a close reading of artifacts reveals tensions between their upward aspirations and limited means.

IN THE FIRST three decades of the twentieth century, the Aufderheide family inhabited the St. Louis townhouse that my wife and I occupied until recently, and they left behind a small trove of discarded artifacts. We salvaged the artifacts during the renovation of the house in the summer of 2002. The collection consists of paper ephemera: handbills, newspaper pieces, train ticket stubs, fragments of letters and household lists, envelopes, postcards, theater programs, and receipts. In addition, there are several three-dimensional pieces: a set of sewing pins stuck through a newspaper, matchsticks, and an empty box of playing cards. The earliest dated piece is from 1907, while the latest is from 1920. The artifacts

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had been deposited over time in a small cavity between the laundry chute and the wall of the kitchen pantry. Occasionally, when the Aufderheides threw their clothes down the chute from the second story to the basement, scraps of paper from their pockets would fall through a seam in the metal ductwork and land in the small cavity. Over a period of fifteen years some eighty artifacts accumulated in the small cavity, forming an "accidental archive."

My aim is to connect the artifacts to the larger story of urban public culture in an early twentieth-century city. This story will reveal both broad processes of transformation in urban public culture occurring nationally, as well as aspects particular to St. Louis. What can we learn from these tiny fragments? How do we know the city of time gone by? Who are those spectral people, haunting us from ephemeral locations? What can their material residues tell us about how they assembled a sense of themselves, defined their civic aspirations, and positioned themselves within a clamorous and bustling urban world?

The moldering, sooty bits of rubbish constitute a kind of "accidental" archive.¹ While the accession and interpretation of this archive have been quite

¹ The soot-coated quality of the Aufderheide artifacts suggests a period of time in which the household heated its rooms with coal. Alternately, the carbon residue could indicate the level of soot present in the general atmosphere of industrial St. Louis. See Caitlin DeSilvey, "Observed Decay: Telling Stories with Mutable Things," *Journal of Material Culture* 11, no. 3 (2006): 318–38.

deliberate on my part, the manner of its formation was unintended. Had these artifacts floated freely amid the commerce in antiques, they might have landed here or there in repose, to be associated with other artifacts of similar genera, displayed in private collections or sandwiched between acid-free folders in purpose-built archives shelved in libraries or historical societies. But disgorged from the home of the family that gathered them, the artifacts are in direct conversation with the building's architecture, and the two situate each other in a coeval, connected world of production and consumption. They must, therefore, be read concurrently and within the wider historical context of their dispensation.²

Researchers in material culture typically triangulate sources in order to develop robust interpretive frameworks and strategies.³ In the case of the Aufderheide collection, we have the rare opportunity to read a group of artifacts within and against the very artifact that captured them for posterity—the house itself. We are, moreover, obliged to read this archive against the purpose-built archives that also capture information on the Aufderheides and their world. To that end, I have consulted documentary sources such as fire insurance maps, city directories, census schedules, property deeds, marriage records, obituaries, and community histories. I also read the architecture of the house as a kind of unintended archive, a catalog of choices as to the organization, circulation, adornment, and habitation of space. Ultimately, to read these varied material and documentary sources, and to probe their wider contexts, requires an interdisciplinary approach that integrates methods of material culture studies, architectural history, and urban history.⁴

² Katherine Grier argues that there are “distinctive limits to the kinds of questions that can be put to things alone.” Material artifacts must be analyzed within the social, cultural, and technological contexts of their creation, circulation, and use. See Katherine Grier, “Culture Made Material,” *American Literary History* 8, no. 3 (1996): 556.

³ Karl Raitz, “Field Observation, Archives, and Explanation,” *Geographical Review* 91, nos. 1/2 (2001): 121–31; Dell Upton, “The Power of Things,” in *Material Culture: A Research Guide*, ed. Thomas Schlereth (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1985), 57–78. For a general overview of material culture research that remains trenchant today, see Thomas Schlereth, *Artifacts and the American Past* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1980).

⁴ Richard Grassby most eloquently outlines the utility of combining these methods in his essay “Material Culture and Cultural History,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35, no. 4 (2005): 591–603. Also see Mary Johnson’s important foray, “What’s in a Butterchurn or a Sandiron? Thoughts on Using Artifacts in Social History,” *Public Historian* 5, no. 1 (Winter 1983): 60–81, and John Bedell’s excellent piece, “Archaeology and Probate Inventories in the Study

of Eighteenth-Century Life,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 31, no. 2 (2001): 223–45. On the integration of material and documentary evidence in analysis of the symbolic and communicative aspects of artifacts, see Ann Smart Martin, “Material Things and Cultural Meanings: Notes on the Study of Early American Material Culture,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (1996): 5–12.

Read in tandem, the accidental and purpose-built archives illuminate one urban petit bourgeois family at a moment of transformation in class, ethnic, and gender identities in the first decades of the twentieth century. I use the term *petit bourgeois* in its technical sense to indicate two principal groups: those that oversee, but do not typically own, capital, and those that own small amounts of capital but do not employ wage earners to any large degree. In the American context this includes not only the literal wealth managers such as factory supervisors, overseers, accountants, insurance agents, and brokers, but also white-collar professionals such as lawyers, doctors, bank clerks, architects, scientists, and engineers. It also includes middling shopkeepers, artisans, and vendors, since their personal (rather than capital) assets typically constitute their principal form of liquidity.

Although these various groups are differentially positioned relative to capital, their interests merge into the broad American middle class. As Anthony Giddens argues, by the turn of the twentieth century the middle class was increasingly aware of its presence but had not consciously mobilized into a collective to define its interests explicitly through politics.⁵ Meanwhile, this emergent middle class was far from homogeneous in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; families continued to draw upon ethnic and religious affiliations to make sense of new circumstances of prosperity, technology, disposable income, and leisure time, all within the increasingly complex urban landscape. Moreover, as petit bourgeois families encountered these new circumstances, their modes of living changed, resulting in transformations in identity, family structure, consumption patterns, and household organization.⁶

Examining the material residues of these changing modes of urban living left behind by the

of Eighteenth-Century Life,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 31, no. 2 (2001): 223–45. On the integration of material and documentary evidence in analysis of the symbolic and communicative aspects of artifacts, see Ann Smart Martin, “Material Things and Cultural Meanings: Notes on the Study of Early American Material Culture,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (1996): 5–12.

⁵ Anthony Giddens, *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies* (London: Hutchinson, 1973), 107–11. Stuart Blumin cautions scholars to reject the overascription of collective consciousness to the middle class in the nineteenth century. See his piece on “The Hypothesis of Middle Class Formation in Nineteenth-Century America: A Critique and Some Proposals,” *American Historical Review* 90, no. 2 (April 1985): 299–338.

⁶ Historians generally argue that a recognizable middle class emerges in the United States in the antebellum period and gains preeminence in the late nineteenth century. See Michael Katz, “Social Class in North American Urban History,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 11, no. 4 (Spring 1981): 579–605; Anthony

Aufderheide family reveals neither a purely private and sovereign petit bourgeois home besieged by the outside world nor a purely status-seeking family aspiring to the elite. Rather, the artifacts reveal a household actively occupied in shaping a middle-class identity that engaged, but also distanced itself from, elite and working-class families through civic, commercial, and infrastructural connectivity.⁷ This connectivity defines a situated urbanism; the artifacts trace the contours of a particular petit bourgeois family grounded in place—in a public culture forged within the local conditions of St. Louis. And yet, these conditions reveal broader social, political, and economic transformations that redefined the American city in the first decades of the twentieth century. They point to a reformation in class, gender, and ethnic relations in the streets, homes, clubs, parks, and other spaces germane to urban life.⁸

As an ensemble, the artifacts recollect members of an incipient social class in energetic pursuit of dreams of a good life, seeking a path within modernity using the tools afforded by modernity, all the while anxious about their place in the very world they were making. The artifacts remind us that the urban public culture of the late nineteenth

and early twentieth centuries emerged not only from architectural produce, engineering triumphs, and industrial exertions, but also from the million daily acts of consumption by ordinary people in daily life.

Embedded Artifacts

Like any old property, our urban plot is an artifact that contains artifacts that contain artifacts. The property itself is an artifact produced by a particular ideology of land allocation, a careful delineation of abstract space, calibrated to the coded language of the urban grid for ease of exchange.⁹ This abstract space becomes place through the accumulation of “improvements” over time, such as sewers, grading, house, garage, utilities, retaining walls, fences, awnings, planters, and yardscape. These improvements in turn bear the imprint of successive owners over multiple generations, the tracery of lives, customs, fashions, and idiosyncrasies. An assemblage of such incremental landscape changes in multiple properties constitutes the material culture of the urban neighborhood in all of its changing variety.¹⁰ Each property is at once an archive of artifacts, and an artifact in its own right—one that contributes to yet a greater archive of aspirations, beliefs, desires, habits, and dreams embedded in the urban landscape.¹¹

Property surveyors, tax assessors, and other agents of municipality define the property as: “W-30’ Lot 16 Tower Grove Heights fig. 30’ st. Magnolia Ave., by

Giddens and David Held, *Classes, Power, and Conflict: Classical and Contemporary Debates* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); and Frank Bechhofer and Brian Elliott, eds., *The Petite Bourgeoisie: Comparative Studies of the Uneasy Stratum* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1981). For a thorough treatment of the contribution of petit bourgeois families to the city building process, see Geoffrey Crossick, *The Petite Bourgeoisie in Europe, 1780–1914* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 112–29.

⁷ I take as a framing assumption that members of social classes seek to inscribe values into spatial forms, and that spatial forms in turn shape and organize class relations. There is abundant scholarship on the spatial manifestations of class and cultural relations. The best work examines society and space as dialogic, mutually constitutive, and historically positioned. See Mark Gottdiener, *The Social Production of Urban Space* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985); David Harvey, *The Urbanization of Capital* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); and Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990). For classic case studies from the United States, see Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper’s Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815–1837* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1978); Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers in an Industrial City, 1870–1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788–1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); and Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁸ Martin Hall uses the metaphor of the palimpsest to describe the layering of meanings and the coding, decoding, and recoding of space in the urban built environment. See Martin Hall, “Identity, Memory, and Counter-memory,” *Journal of Material Culture* 11, no. 1/2 (2006): 189–209.

⁹ Keller Easterling, *Organization Space: Landscapes, Highways, and Houses in America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 129–32.

¹⁰ Paul Groth, “Streetgrids as Frameworks for Urban Variety,” *Harvard Architectural Review* 2 (1981): 68–75; Steward Brand, *How Buildings Learn: What Happens after They’re Built* (New York: Penguin, 1995).

¹¹ To place artifacts of the built environment in context, I read architecture and interior spaces dialogically—as both registers and generators of cultural meaning. Moreover, I examine these spaces and meanings as they change over time. This reading strategy draws on a range of key scholarly works, including: Donald Meining, ed., *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Paul Groth and Todd Bressi, eds., *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997); Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981); Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981); Pierce Lewis, “Learning from Looking: Geographic and Other Writing about the American Cultural Landscape,” *American Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (1983): 242–62; Michael Ann Williams and M. Jane Young, “Grammar, Codes and Performance: Linguistic and Sociolinguistic Models in the Study of Vernacular Architecture,” in *Gender, Class, and Shelter*, ed. Elizabeth Collings Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins, vol. 5 of *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 45–51.



Fig. 1. The Aufderheide Home, 3456 Magnolia Avenue, St. Louis. (Photo, Joseph Heathcott.)

dpt. S 125', bnd by Arkansas Ave."¹² But through the "phenomenon of place" we experience this abstraction as a brick-and-mortar house and small green yard with a conventional address of 3456 Magnolia Avenue.¹³ The house has stood for 100 years, a solid pile of materials rising up at the corner of Magnolia and Arkansas on a narrow city lot just one block east of Tower Grove Park in South St. Louis (fig. 1). A rear courtyard, backed by a brick Model T garage, separates the house from the alley. Load-bearing brick walls rest atop a 6-foot limestone foundation, while wood and glass and plaster weave the fabric of the interior. The guts are iron, steel, ceramic, and lead. The house is a kiln in the summer and an icebox in the winter. It was assembled from the vast array of available materials by skilled practitioners of

¹² Title Transfer Accounts for W30 Lot 16, Block 1449, Office of the Recorder of Deeds of the City of St. Louis.

¹³ Christian Norberg-Schulz, "The Phenomenon of Place," *Architectural Association Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (1976), reprinted in *Designing Cities: Critical Readings in Urban Design*, ed. Alexander Cuthbert (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).



Fig. 2. Renovation project in progress. We retrieved the Aufderheide artifacts from the space between the tin laundry chute and the pantry wall. (Photo, Joseph Heathcott.)

trades competing relentlessly for berths in a low-wage immigrant labor pool. This congress of abundant materials and skilled labor fixed itself to the landscape in a fury of building, producing, and extending the great industrial city.

One hot day in June, midway through the rehabilitation process, before my spouse and I moved in, a friend of ours was widening the kitchen pantry door (fig. 2). It was a tricky job, as the goal was to save the old tin laundry chute that ran beside the pantry, connecting the top floor with the basement, as it constitutes an original system. When at last he breached the plaster and let light into the cavity around the chute, he found an accumulation of debris. Upon closer inspection, it was clear that the debris was actually a trove of artifacts, the paper leavings of William ("W. D.") and Agnes Aufderheide.

A title deed search and a glance at city directories had already told me that the Aufderheides lived in this house soon after it was built in 1905 and that W. D. Aufderheide was a medical doctor and pharmacist by profession. Yet, unlike title deeds or city directories or census schedules, the Aufderheides actually touched, used, and discarded these artifacts. They made decisions about their acquisition and dispensation and consigned them to an accidental posterity. Unlike family photographs or diaries, the artifacts are domestic detritus—the unintended leavings of daily urban life.

Gently retrieved from the laundry chute, these artifacts provide a rare, if fragmentary, glimpse into the world of the early twentieth-century petite bourgeoisie. And just as these artifacts were embedded

spatially in the bowels of our house, they in turn embed the Aufderheide family within the broader world of a connected, quotidian public culture, a fin de siècle urban world of parks and clubs and fashions and travel, a world of possibility for a social class increasingly aware of and excited by its own presence. At the same time, the artifacts, and indeed the very architecture that embeds them, reveal what scholar Nancy Dunlap Bercau has described as the cultural disquiet beneath the “new and ill-defined social order.”¹⁴

The Urban, Civic, and Neighborhood Landscapes of St. Louis

St. Louis at the turn of the last century was the fourth most populous city in the United States, a bustling jumble of neighborhoods in various stages of development and habitation, tenuously linked by a dense and expanding network of streetcars and sewers.¹⁵ The city clung to the Mississippi River, stretching along its banks for some twenty miles. Over 575,000 souls crowded into its tenements, alley houses, mansions, flophouses, and flats. Originally French, briefly Spanish, wave after wave of immigrants remade St. Louis in its territorial and national phases, from the Anglo and Irish wealth seekers of the Jacksonian age, to the African wealth producers of a slaving city, to the unstinting flood of Germans loosed by the failed revolution of 1848. Germans came to dominate the civic life of St. Louis well into the twentieth century, and their attitude of *gemütlichkeit*, or warmth and good feeling, suffused the public culture of the city.¹⁶

Gemütlichkeit, however, could not soothe the bitter divisions that cleaved through the city prior

¹⁴ Nancy Dunlap Bercau, “Solid Objects/Mutable Meanings: Fancywork and the Construction of Bourgeois Culture, 1840–1880,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 26, no. 4 (1991): 233.

¹⁵ St. Louis, like most cities, expanded in fits and starts, sometimes in advance of streetcar and sewerage extensions, more often in their wake. See Katharine Corbett’s excellent essay, “Draining the Metropolis: The Politics of Sewers in Nineteenth-Century St. Louis,” in *Common Fields: An Environmental History of St. Louis*, ed. Andrew Hurley (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1997), 107–25. On the role of traction-based mass-transit systems in the development of cities, see Sam Bass Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870–1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).

¹⁶ Audrey L. Olson, *St. Louis Germans, 1850–1920: The Nature of an Immigrant Community and Its Relation to the Assimilation Process* (New York: Arno, 1980), 240–42. On the character of nineteenth-century civic and institutional life, see the fascinating contemporary account by Joseph Dacus and James Buel, *A Tour of St. Louis or, The Inside Life of a Great City* (St. Louis: Western Publishing Co., 1878); and James Neil Primm, *Lion of the Valley* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1981).

to, during, and indeed beyond the Civil War. The German immigrants remained staunch Unionists and formed the backbone of the antislavery wing of the Republican Party in St. Louis.¹⁷ In the decades following the Civil War, upstart German industrialists competed with old-line French and Anglo-American families for control over capital, wealth, land, and government. The smokestack landscape spread across the prairie in terrific fits and starts, as factories churned out shoes, shirts, stoves, furniture, boilers, cigars, streetcars, and beer in unimaginable quantity.¹⁸ Around the factories, builders knitted together a landscape of elite mansions, middle-class apartments, and working-class cottages and tenements.¹⁹ Periodic labor insurgencies erupted out of the shop floors and onto the streets, lending an air of instability to modern city life.²⁰

However uneven or unstable, the tremendous wealth trapped in the city by value-added production conditioned the prosperity and growth of a middling class of small shopkeepers, managers, and professionals. As the industrial city and its business institutions, governmental structure, finance, and utility networks grew ever more complex, the new middle class expanded to manage the complexity—to articulate the broadening capital web through the mesh of information, technology, organization, governance, time discipline, and varied modes of

¹⁷ Louis Gerteis, *Civil War St. Louis* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001).

¹⁸ Katharine Corbett, *Saint Louis in the Gilded Age* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1993). In 1885 the St. Louis Merchant Exchange launched an annual report on the St. Louis industrial economy titled *Annual Statement on the Trade and Commerce of St. Louis* (St. Louis: St. Louis Merchant Exchange, 1885). For a booster account of the variety and scope of nineteenth-century economic development, see Francis Devereaux, *Missouri’s Manufacturers: Her Wealth, Industry and Commerce* (St. Louis: Comley Brothers and the Democrat Lithographing and Printing Co., 1874). L. U. Revis’s Whiggish study of St. Louis goods transportation contains a solid overview of commercial developments in a section titled “A Presentation of the Great Commercial and Manufacturing Establishments of St. Louis,” in *The Railway and River Systems of the City of St. Louis* (St. Louis: Woodward, Tiernan & Hale, 1879). Harry Leslie Purdy provides a useful if outdated atlas of economic development over time in *An Historical Analysis of the Economic Growth of St. Louis, 1840–1945*, Missouri Historical Society Special Collections, St. Louis (ca. 1946).

¹⁹ For an excellent historical archaeology of working-class material culture gleaned from pit latrine recoveries, see the Archaeological Research Center of St. Louis, *Data Recovery Investigations at the Cochran Gardens Hope VI Housing Development Tract* (St. Louis: University of Missouri at St. Louis, 2006).

²⁰ David Thayer Burbank, *City of Little Bread: The St. Louis General Strike of 1877* (St. Louis: self-published, 1957), *Reign of the Rabble: The St. Louis General Strike* (New York: A. M. Kelley, 1966); Katherine Corbett, *In Her Place: A Guide to St. Louis Women’s History* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1999), 116–20, 168–70, 258–60.

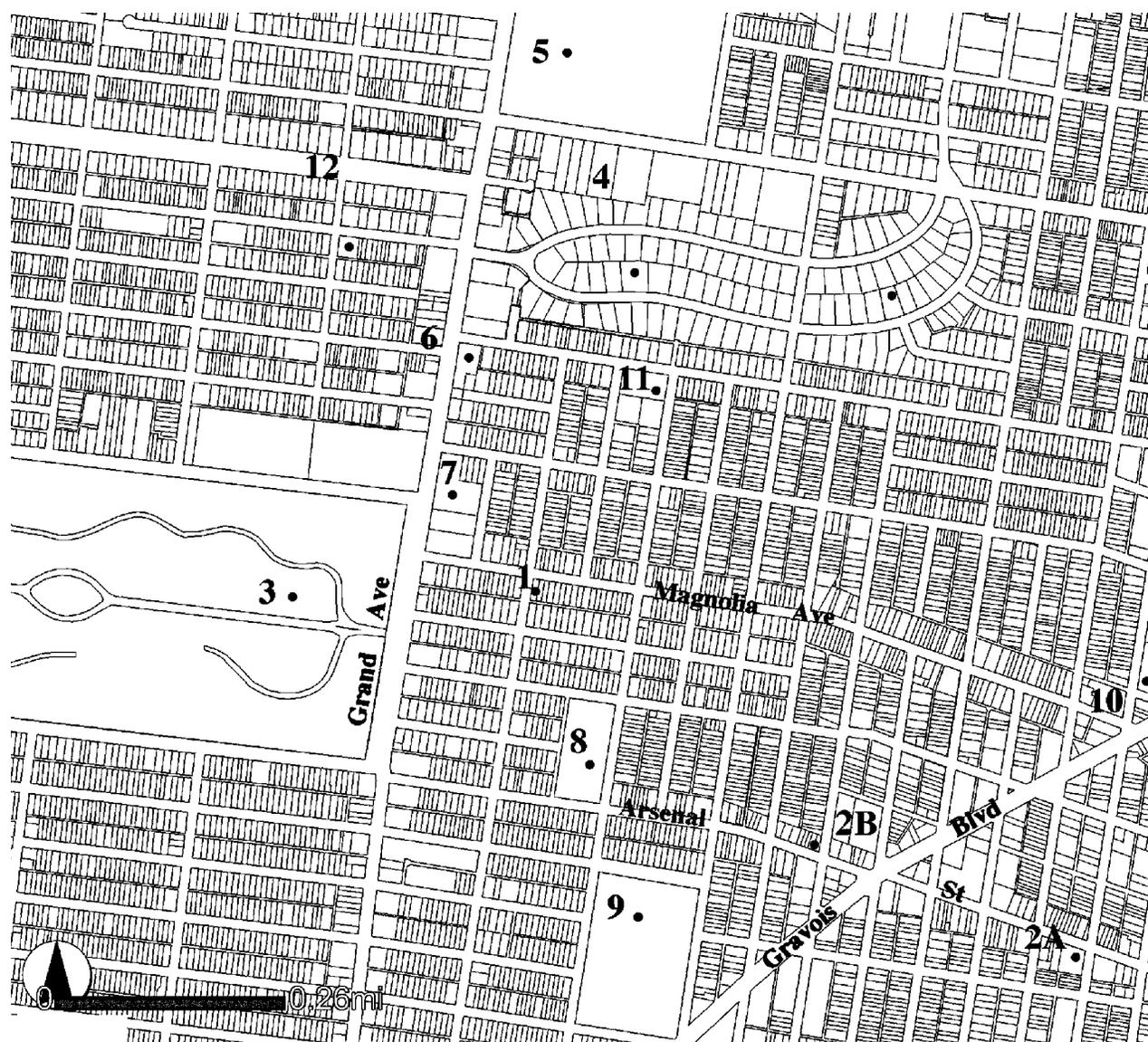


Fig. 3. Map of Tower Grove and the near south side of St. Louis. (Constructed by Joseph Heathcott using City of St. Louis GIS Base Map.) Details of map: 1, 3456 Magnolia Avenue; 2, Aufderheide Practice: A, 1898–1910, B, 1910–1930; 3, Tower Grove Park; 4, Compton Heights; 5, Reservoir Park; 6, Strassberger Conservatory; 7, Liederkranz Club; 8, St. Elizabeth's Convent; 9, Roosevelt High School; 10, St. Francis de Sales; 11, Shenandoah Elementary; 12, B'Nai El Temple.

risk mitigation.²¹ The children of the immigrant Germans were well placed to enter this petite bourgeoisie. One generation removed from the stench and hot brutality of the factory floor, they opened groceries, livery stables, machine shops, cigar stores, pharmacies, saloons, and boardinghouses. They also inaugurated progressive political organizations,

fraternal orders, schools, newspapers, funeral societies, dance halls, kindergartens, and turnverein—quintessentially German immigrant social institutions that combined gymnasia, lecture facilities, adult education, and beer gardens. From these resources, they created the petit bourgeois world of fin de siècle St. Louis.²²

²¹ Maury Klein, *The Flowering of the Third America: The Making of an Organizational Society, 1850–1920* (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 1993), 42–56; Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1982), 82–84, and on Standard Oil as an example, 85–86.

²² For a fine-grained memoir of middle-class German family life in St. Louis at the turn of the last century, see Arthur Proetz, *I Remember You, St. Louis* (St. Louis: Zimmerman-Petty, 1963). Scholarship on German immigrants in St. Louis is woefully underdeveloped



Fig. 4. Postcard of Compton Hill Reservoir Park and Water Tower, ca. 1920.

Meanwhile, by 1900 the older neighborhoods ringing downtown St. Louis began to fill up with new immigrants from Russia, Poland, Bohemia, Italy, and all corners of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.²³ Germans, having established roots and made good, began a rapid out-migration to recently developed areas of the city, both to start households and to escape the peculiar languages, habits, foods, and beliefs of the Southern and Eastern European families. Increasingly, they moved their new families to distant neighborhoods opened up along streetcar lines, including the blocks surrounding Tower Grove Park, the major anchor of the city's south side (fig. 3).

The neighborhood where our former house stands adjoins the eastern border of Tower Grove Park. The park is a High Victorian assemblage of gardens, pavilions, follies, pools, and promenades—

compared to analogue communities in Cincinnati and Milwaukee. Major studies include Olson, *St. Louis Germans*, 240–42; Walter Schmidt, *Sozialistische Bestrebungen deutscher Arbeiter in St. Louis vor 1848: Der St. Louis-Communistenverein* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1990); Paul Michael Lutzeler, “The St. Louis World’s Fair of 1904 as a Site of Cultural Transfer: German and German-American Participation,” in *German Culture in Nineteenth-Century America: Reception, Adaptation, Transformation*, ed. Lynne Tatlock and Matt Erlin (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005); William Barnaby Faherty, *The St. Louis German Catholics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

²³ Margaret Lo Piccolo Sullivan, *Hyphenism in St. Louis, 1900–1921: The View from the Outside* (New York: Garland, 1990); Gary Ross Mormino, *Immigrants on the Hill: Italian-Americans in St. Louis, 1882–1982* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002); Sister M. Angela Senyszyn, *The Polish-Born Immigrant in Saint Louis, 1860–1900* (MA thesis, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 1979); June M. Sommer, ed., *History of the Czechs in Missouri, 1845 to 1904*, trans. Frank E. Frank (St. Louis: St. Louis Genealogical Society, 1988).

a landscape framework for South St. Louis public culture.²⁴ Designed in 1856 and implemented in 1868 by businessman, botanist, and former slave owner Henry Shaw, Tower Grove Park occupies 220 acres of land that was once part of the extensive common fields. While Shaw initially envisioned a ring of elite Italianate mansions encircling the park, the neighborhoods that emerged in the latter nineteenth century were considerably less grandiose, largely comprised of modest homes and shops.²⁵ Nevertheless, Tower Grove Park represented the emergence of a new urban form, a break in the speculative grid, and a calm repose in an increasingly noisy and bustling city.²⁶

Another anchor of the area is the Compton Heights Reservoir (see fig. 3). Established in 1871 to provide reliable clean water to the neighborhoods, the principal feature of the park is a 179-foot Romanesque water tower (fig. 4). Designed in

²⁴ Eric Sandweiss, “From a Garden Looking Out: Public Culture in Henry Shaw’s St. Louis,” in his *St. Louis in the Century of Henry Shaw: A View Beyond the Garden Wall* (St. Louis: Missouri Botanical Garden and Missouri Historical Society; Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003); William Barnaby Faherty, *Henry Shaw, His Life and Legacies* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987).

²⁵ Carol Grove, *Henry Shaw’s Victorian Landscape: The Missouri Botanical Gardens and Tower Grove Park* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 130–48.

²⁶ On the development of this landscape form, see David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Witold Rybczynski, *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Scribner, 1999); Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

1899 by architect George Mann, the tower's principal function was to house a standpipe for the gravitational regulation of water flow. In 1914, members of the St. Louis German-American Alliance, a south side booster club, added a statue to the park to memorialize three German American journalists: Carl Schurz, Emil Preetorius, and Carl Daenzer. The alliance commissioned sculptor Wilhelm Wandschneider of Berlin, who carved the appropriately titled statue "Truth, Unadorned, Unequivocal." The statue, featuring a nude, torch-bearing woman in an overscaled, expressionist repose, provoked controversy among the culturally conservative south side German families. But Truth's torch symbolized the "enlightenment of the German and American Alliance," and reflects a moment of ease in Anglo-Teutonic relations just before the onset of the Great War.²⁷

Besides churches, shops, and parks, the other major institutional anchors of the neighborhood were the schools. The large population of radical and liberal Germans—the "St. Louis Hegelians"—made the city an early laboratory for educational reform, the expansion of public schooling, the development of the kindergarten, the playground movement, and the modern school physical plant.²⁸ Unfortunately, despite the progressive character of the St. Louis public schools in terms of curriculum and educational philosophy, they maintained strict racial segregation—a condition that would have long-lasting detrimental affects on the politics and social relations of St. Louis.

As W. D. and Agnes Aufderheide came of age in the neighborhoods of South St. Louis, the construction of public school buildings was the most prominent civic effort they encountered in their daily lives. The organization of South St. Louis public schools coincided with the high point in the career of the German American public school architect William Ittner. Born and raised in St. Louis,

Ittner designed hundreds of school buildings across the United States in a career spanning five decades. As superintending architect for the St. Louis public school system, Ittner designed most of the administrative, recreational, utilitarian, and instructional facilities built between 1890 and 1920. One of his earliest buildings in the Tower Grove area was the Grant School, completed in 1893. He and his protégé, R. M. Milligan, went on to design many other facilities within a ten-block radius of Tower Grove Park, including five more public elementary schools, a major high school, and the Missouri School for the Deaf. The closest school to the Aufderheide home, however, was St. Elizabeth's Academy on Arsenal Street, established in 1882 by the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood (see map, fig. 3). The campus of St. Elizabeth's accrued buildings over time, with varied and changing functions, including an asylum, a convent, an elementary school, and, since 1922, a girls' high school.²⁹

The neighborhoods around Tower Grove Park expanded through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, partly along the extending streetcar lines, partly along lines of land speculation and real estate deals.³⁰ The experience of urban space in these new areas of the city differed in substantial ways from that of the older rowhouse and tenement districts near the river. Immigrants settling into older districts found cramped rows of tenements packed together at grade, with jagged and ill-defined lots astride narrow streets. Speculative builders in the new districts opening up around Tower Grove in the early 1900s found a palette of commodious streets braced by regular, ample lots raised three to five feet above grade and with ten- to twenty-foot frontages and property depths of over 100 feet.³¹ Atop these lots they furnished a range of improvements, producing

²⁷ For an excellent description of this important feature of the St. Louis urban landscape, see Carolyn Hewes Toft and Jane Molly Porter, *Compton Heights: A Historical and Architectural Guide* (St. Louis: Landmarks Association of St. Louis, 1984). The quote comes from *The German-American Heritage in St. Louis* (St. Louis: St. Louis Public Library), 14.

²⁸ In fact, many teachers and administrators in the post-Civil War public schools belonged to the radical Hegelians, collected in the St. Louis Philosophical Society and devoted to the society's *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. See Elizabeth Flower and Murray Murphy, "The Absolute Immigrates to America: The St. Louis Hegelians," in their *A History of Philosophy in America* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1977), 2:463–514; Sharon Huffman, *St. Louis Public Schools: 160 Years of Challenge, Change, and Commitment to the Children of St. Louis, 1838–1998* (St. Louis: St. Louis Public Schools, 1998).

²⁹ See sections on schools in Norbury Wayman's neighborhood histories: *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Compton Heights* (St. Louis: Community Development Agency, 1980), *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Shaw* (St. Louis: Community Development Agency, 1980), and *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Marquette-Cherokee* (St. Louis: Community Development Agency, 1980). Also see the National Register of Historic Places, St. Louis Public Schools of William B. Ittner Multiple Property Survey (Addendum), a multiple-listing rubric for most of the Ittner- and Mulligan-designed buildings in the city.

³⁰ Frederick Anthony Hodes, "The Urbanization of St. Louis: A Study in Urban Residential Patterns in the Nineteenth Century" (PhD diss., Saint Louis University, 1973); Berl Katz, *One Hundred Years of Streetcars in St. Louis* (St. Louis: National Museum of Transport, 1959). Sequent street traction maps can be found in the map collection of the Missouri Historical Society.

³¹ Sandweiss, *St. Louis*, 135–39.

thousands of detached single-family townhouses and duplexes with generously proportioned interiors, substantial and uniform setbacks, airy porches, intricate millwork, stained glass, and indoor plumbing. The detachment of the buildings produced what historian Eric Sandweiss has called “public rooms,” outdoor spaces characterized by openness, permeability, and modularity with respect to the streetscape.³²

Residents of the houses, flats, and apartments of Tower Grove fulfilled most of their daily or weekly requirements within walking distance. They attended to their spiritual needs in one of the dozen or more religious institutions, including St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church, Messiah Lutheran Church, and the B’Nai El Temple. They connected to civic and public life through nearby schools, turnverein, clubhouses, parks, and libraries. They shopped for their provisions along two intersecting commercial high streets, Grand and Arsenal, as well as in dozens of small neighborhood intersections. At the intersection of Magnolia and Arkansas, for example, the Aufderheides enjoyed immediate access to a baker, two grocers, and a tavern. Dry goods sellers, greengrocers, butchers, and food jobbers supplied the needs of local households, while a variety of specialty shops catered to extramural crowds transported in by the streetcars.³³

The Social Frameworks of an Urban Public Culture

The dwellings around Tower Grove Park contained small, ethnically diverse families, with the exception that no African Americans resided in the neighborhood. In the first decades of the twentieth century, South St. Louis became a white-defended enclave through a combination of racial covenants and real estate agreements. Between 1900 and 1930, while the African American population increased from 6 percent to 11 percent of the city total, they remained absent from the wards and tracts around Tower Grove Park.³⁴ German immigrants brought

with them to St. Louis a range of progressive and radical ideas, including commitments to free labor and the abolition of slavery. However, in this essentially Southern city, German liberalism seldom translated into tolerance for racial mixing. Up on the city’s north side, working-class African American families jumbled together with Irish and Italian immigrant households in a complex settlement pattern based largely on market demands for cheap rental properties. But Germans on the south side seldom encountered African Americans in their neighborhood, and by the late nineteenth century they were no longer in competition with black laborers for jobs.³⁵ The Tower Grove area remained almost uniformly white until the 1960s.³⁶

Though ranging in age from young to very old, many of the heads of household in 1910 and 1920 were in their thirties with one, two, or three children. While a large number of young couples rented units in the duplexes and four-flat apartments of the neighborhood, very few owned a dwelling, probably due to the high cost of housing and difficulty in obtaining a reasonably rated mortgage. Most of the duplex apartments contained either elderly residents, sometimes with an unmarried older child, or middle-aged, childless couples. Larger households usually contained not more children but grandparents, nieces or nephews, servants, and boarders.

While German Americans predominated, over one-third of the residents were either born in or were children of parents hailing from a range of European countries, including Ireland, England, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden, and Bohemia. The 1920 census pinpoints the regional origins of many of the German American families; near the Aufderheides lived couples whose parents came from Hesse, Darmstadt, Stuttgart, and French-speaking Alsace-Lorraine. Another large group of families were native-born Anglo-Americans from Missouri, South Carolina, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and Indiana. Regardless of ethnicity, family sizes tended to be smaller than in the crowded old tenement districts to the east of Tower Grove such as Soulard, Benton Park, and Kosciusko. This suggests

³² *Ibid.*, 140.

³³ National Register of Historic Places, Tower Grove Heights Historic District (Boundary Increase), 2004, Register no. 04000281. The historic district is bounded by Magnolia Street, Louisiana Avenue, Cherokee Street/Gravois Avenue, and Grand Avenue. It covers 1,048 acres in South St. Louis and includes 781 buildings.

³⁴ On segregation and its impact on St. Louis political life, see Joseph Heathcott, “Black Archipelago: Politics and Civic Life in Jim Crow St. Louis,” *Journal of Social History* 38, no. 3 (March 2005): 705–36.

³⁵ Walter Kamphoefner, “Learning from the Majority-Minority City: Immigration in Nineteenth Century St. Louis,” in Sandweiss, *St. Louis in the Century of Henry Shaw*, 92–94.

³⁶ Today, the Tower Grove area has a large African American and new immigrant population. According to the U.S. Census of 2000, the aggregate population of the three major neighborhoods bordering Tower Grove Park is 30,203, of which 46 percent are white, 43 percent black, 6 percent Asian, and 3 percent Latino. About 12 percent of the population is foreign born, including a sizable number of Vietnamese and Somalis.

the growing influence and practice of the middle-class companionate family ideal, with its lower fertility and birth rates and diminished extended family arrangements.³⁷ Nevertheless, despite this influence, families in Tower Grove sorted themselves into numerous and varied configurations.

These configurations can be seen in microcosm on the Aufderheides' block in 1910. Walking the short block east on Magnolia Avenue from Arkansas Street to Tennessee Street, census enumerator Gustave Hanssens encountered twelve households living in seven buildings. Starting at the corner of Magnolia and Arkansas, Hanssens found the Aufderheide home, then only five years old, with its collection of four residents—W. D. and Agnes Aufderheide (thirty-four and thirty-three years old, respectively), their eight-year-old daughter Gertrude, and their twenty-six-year-old servant Emma Buhle. Next to the Aufderheides was a duplex owned and inhabited by a fifty-three-year-old widow, Louise Blum. Louise lived on the second floor with her son Charles and niece Lula Lang. She rented the first floor to her daughter and son-in-law, Clara and Paul Deichman. Continuing to the next dwelling, enumerator Hanssens found another duplex, this one owned and inhabited by German-born A. G. Boettger, his wife of thirty years, Mary, and their nineteen-year-old son Walter, the youngest of four living children and the only one remaining in the home. A recently married couple, Frank and Bertha Saler, rented the upstairs rooms.

Continuing east to the next address, 3444 Magnolia, Hanssens found a duplex owned by Christina Knudsin. Born in Denmark in 1874, she immigrated to the United States at the age of fifteen; nine years later, in 1889, her brother David joined her, and by 1910 they resided together in the upstairs apartment of their Magnolia Avenue duplex. To earn an independent income, Christina took in boarders. In addition to a German-born housekeeper, enumerator Hanssens found two boarders living in the upstairs apartment: sixty-four-year-old widow Christine Nicklaus from Germany, and sixty-year-old widower Ernst Birsch, who came to the United States from Germany in 1871 and listed his occupation as "minister." Christina Knudsin rented the downstairs flat to William and Emily Martin from South Carolina and their three young children. Absentee

owners were rare in the neighborhood in the early decades of the twentieth century; the only building not occupied by its owner in the short block was a duplex at 3440 Magnolia, inhabited by two renting families.

Most important to the character of the community, however, were the occupations of the heads of household and their working dependents. The families in the blocks surrounding Tower Grove Park earned their keep as self-employed jobbers and artisans, middle managers and supervisors in business concerns, and educated professionals. Examining households within a two-block radius of the Aufderheide home reveals that the nature of occupations changed very little between the decennial censuses of 1910 and 1920—with the important exception that in 1920 many more unmarried daughters worked outside of the home as clerks, stenographers, and milliners.

Some residents earned money by offering services from their home or as free agents, such as boarding-house operators, ministers, insurance solicitors, and florists. In the house across the alley from the Aufderheides, facing Halliday Street, head of household John Calloway reported his occupation as "musician." Lori Stint, a young woman living with her parents in the last house on the 3400 block of Magnolia, reported her occupation as a self-employed "impersonator and reader." Those who earned income as proprietors of small shops and businesses reported titles such as: physician (Dr. Aufderheide), grocer, butcher, real estate agent, and one "practitioner of Christian Science." Workers in the skilled trades were less common in the neighborhood, limited to the odd cigar roller, cabinet maker, carpenter, engraver, printer, and brick mason, but their presence attests to the increasing wealth and aspirations of the artisan class.

Most numerous, however, were white-collar professionals, managers, and staff employed by larger business operations. They constituted a diverse array of occupations and stations, including vice president of a barber supply house, commercial trader in millinery, wholesale buyer, railroad foreman, race-track clerk, civil engineer for the street department, credit man for a pork and beef packer, manager of a steam laundry, cashier for a varnish company, cattle buyer, and brewery bookkeeper. If the men and women of the Tower Grove area did not provide the brute labor power that underpinned the industrial city, they nevertheless supplied the expanding metropolis with the organization, delivery, sales, and service that kept the urban economy running. In this

³⁷ On the development of the companionate family ideal and middle-class household organization, see Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York: Free Press, 1988).

way, the petit bourgeois households of Tower Grove contributed vitally to St. Louis public culture and the broader city-building process.

Architecture and the Petite Bourgeoisie

Of all the arts, architecture provides the most consistent mediation between the private sphere of individuals and families and the broader public realm. The house at 3456 Magnolia Avenue is one small cipher in the explosion of city building that pushed fin de siècle St. Louis to new extents. The biography of the property is unique, yet interwoven with and connected to the larger civic narrative. Scholars write biographies of buildings by querying their architecture, consulting municipal documents, and rifling through deed records. However, individual houses, shops, factories, churches, and civic buildings inhabit broader circumstances; they are, in fact, enveloped within a built environment, a cultural landscape, a political economy of materials and symbols. Any building biography must reconstruct the social, cultural, and physical contexts of this broader setting.³⁸

Designed by residential architect Henry Schaumberg, our home was one of many that sprouted up in the building boom that followed the 1904 World's Fair.³⁹ Like most in Tower Grove, the house reveals both the optimism and anxieties of the emerging petite bourgeoisie, poised in tension between their high aspirations and limited material circumstances. The house is possessed of a

beauty and rectitude that make it a haven from the noisome factories and shop floors of the working city, but its existence is made possible by the very industrial processes it seeks to escape. It exudes craftsmanship but contains a great many mass-produced features. Indeed, all of the house's window trim, mantle installments, stair rails, balustrades, newel posts, door jambs, and crown molding, while lustrous, are mass-produced.⁴⁰ The house pretends to wealth but is muffled by the modesty of its station.

Proximity to adjoining neighborhoods further positions the house and its neighbors within a clearly demarcated status in the urban hierarchy. It supersedes in volume and lot size the housing units found in older districts near the river, such as Soulard and Benton Park.⁴¹ However, the house is dwarfed by the ornate Georgian, Italianate, and Foursquare mansions of the nearby private streets of Compton Heights (see fig. 3). Municipal surveyor and city beautiful advocate Julius Pitzman laid out Compton Heights in 1889, endowing the lots with wide frontages and deep setbacks.⁴² Where the Aufderheide home yokes to the street grid of the industrial city, the mansions of Compton Heights array astride capacious curvilinear streets that defy the mechanized quality of the grid with a planned, controlled, "natural" parklike landscape.⁴³ Where the Aufderheide home inhabits a mixed-use neighborhood of modest houses, duplexes, apartment buildings, schools, corner shops, stables, and a fire station, Pitzman restricted Compton Heights to single-family homes, sheltering residents from the noise and bustle of the workaday city. The mansions soon filled with "first or second generation German-Americans of wealth and influence," and the proximity of the two

³⁸ There is a substantial literature on the history of specific buildings and building groups, much of it in the form of nomination narratives for the National Register of Historic Places. Illustrative monographs in this area include: Andrew Dolkart's single-building study, *Biography of a Tenement House in New York City: An Architectural History of 97 Orchard Street* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006); Ross Miller's finely grained examination of one city block of Chicago, *Here's the Deal: The Making and Breaking of a Great American City* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2003); and James Borchert's now-classic study of a particular form of living in the nation's capital, *Alley Life in Washington: Family, Religion, Community, and Folklife in the City, 1850–1970* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980).

³⁹ Wayman, *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Compton Heights*, 12. In fact, the house sits on property that Isaiah Steedman inherited in 1884 from his father-in-law, railroad and iron ore magnate James Harrison. In 1892, Steedman delineated a portion of the property as the Switzer Place Subdivision. However, it was not until after the 1904 World's Fair that houses emerged atop the subdivided lots. Sandweiss, *St. Louis*, 134. Also refer to subdivision map in Sandweiss, *St. Louis*, 89. Schaumberg was identified as the architect of the house by the Landmarks Association of St. Louis in their multiple-property nomination for the Tower Grove East Historic District.

⁴⁰ For an excellent treatment of the development of mass-produced furnishings, appurtenances, and features, see Pamela Simpson, *Cheap, Quick, and Easy: Imitative Architectural Materials, 1870–1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999).

⁴¹ Sandweiss, *St. Louis*, 104–11.

⁴² On Julius Pitzman's career and importance in the history of St. Louis street and land development, see *ibid.*, 270 n. 24. On the origins and development of this new residential format, see Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias* (New York: Basic, 1987). Unlike many of his contemporaries who laid out parks as correctives to the crowded urban condition, Pitzman spent much of his career in an attempt to alter that condition by integrating the parkscape into the residential neighborhood. Unfortunately, Pitzman has been overlooked as a major innovator of suburban design.

⁴³ Toft and Porter, *Compton Heights*. On the development of the private street system in St. Louis, see David Beito and Bruce Smith, "The Formation of Urban Infrastructure through Non-governmental Planning: The Private Places of St. Louis, 1869–1920," *Journal of Urban History* 16 (1990): 263–303.

neighborhoods must have been a constant reminder of status and station in the city.⁴⁴

The very architecture of 3456 Magnolia Avenue reverberates with frustrated class aspirations. The dining room is prim and formal, but small. The premises were too restricted by lot size to support a carriage house, but the family did eventually construct a brick Model T garage. The house was not large enough to accommodate servants in separate quarters, so the family likely alternated between day servants and overnight servants sleeping in the small back room on the second floor near the laundry chute. In the 1910 U.S. Census, for example, the Aufderheide home included one live-in servant, but in 1920 there was no live-in servant, probably because daughter Gertrude was eighteen years old and could therefore assume many household duties.⁴⁵ Despite offering few residential provisions for servants, architect Schaumberg catered to petit bourgeois pretensions by providing double stairwells and a butler's pantry to separate the traffic of servants from that of employers. Space was in short supply, however, so the servants' stairwell twists at a precarious angle to accommodate the necessary turn, and the butler's pantry contains a small built-in cupboard with just enough room to accommodate the swinging door to the dining room.

As with most middle-class housing built at the turn of the century, the Aufderheide home presents a modest program made possible through industrial economies of scale in labor, materials, and technology. Indeed, the very political economy that produced oligarchies, combines, and class warfare also produced the materials necessary to democratize home building and furnishing.

Rapidly multiplying overlays of utility networks and technical systems wove through the city, connecting to households through appurtenances such as valves, spigots, pipes, wires, junctures, and taps.⁴⁶ By bundling public and quasi-public utilities into the architecture of the home, petit bourgeois families could reorganize their daily lives around greater levels of comfort. These utilities became widely available to the middle class through economies of scale provided by pooled and managed capital assets

⁴⁴ *The German-American Heritage in St. Louis*, 14.

⁴⁵ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the Population: Missouri* (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1910), and *Fourteenth Census of the Population: Missouri* (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1920).

⁴⁶ Thomas Schlereth, "Conduits and Conduct: Home Utilities in Victorian America, 1876–1915," in Jessica H. Foy and Thomas Schlereth, eds., *American Home Life, 1880–1930: A Social History of Spaces and Services* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 225–41.

(power plants, sewers, water reservoirs, natural gas piping) amortized across generations.⁴⁷ Ironically, their homes, while built at a remove from the noxious factory districts, were literally bonded to and interwoven with the industrial plant to a much greater degree than the working-class tenements that actually abutted the factories.

Meanwhile, St. Louis builders made use of abundant natural materials such as wood and clay—extracted, processed, and finished through industrial operations. St. Louis brick manufacturers like Hydraulic Press, Progress Brick, and Fernholz proffered decorative brick—kiln-fired clay pieces shaped in molds—to provide both structural integrity and aesthetic flourish. And German and Italian masons, abundant in the city during the building booms of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, provided the essential craft knowledge necessary to produce high-quality brick buildings. Despite having the ability to create an elaborate confection of stone and terra cotta, however, the builder chose to provide only a thin decorative program through a rhythmic treatment of brick coursing around windows and cornice.⁴⁸

This modest scheme continues on the interior, where relatively inexpensive mass-produced installments substitute for costly handcrafted elements. The woodwork glows with a warm luster, but it is factory milled. The foyer, with its two-turn staircase, stained glass windows, and wall-size pocket doors, is designed for what Kenneth Ames terms "impression management."⁴⁹ Yet it is a small space, made to feel larger by a combination of the vertical volume of the stairwell and a large console mirror. The dining room persists as a Victorian convention, standing alone as a singularly programmed room, but its formality is blunted by no less than six apertures: a pocket door open to the living room, a transom-headed door to the hall, a swinging door to the butler's pantry, and three windows.⁵⁰ This

⁴⁷ Thomas Hughes, *Networks of Power: Electrification in Western Society, 1880–1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Josef Konvitz, Mark Rose, and Joel Tarr, "Technology and the City," *Technology and Culture* 31, no. 2 (1990): 284–94; Ann Durkin Keating, *Invisible Networks: Exploring the History of Local Utilities and Public Works* (Malabar, FL: Krieger, 1994).

⁴⁸ Pamela Ambrose, ed., *Brick by Brick: Building St. Louis and the Nation* (St. Louis: Cupples Historic House Museum and Gallery, 2005), 6–12, 38–39.

⁴⁹ Kenneth Ames, *Death in the Dining Room and Other Tales of Victorian Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 8–10.

⁵⁰ On the Victorian dining room as a women-constructed family sanctuary, see Robert Fitts, "The Archaeology of Middle-Class Domesticity and Gentility in Victorian Brooklyn," *Historical Archaeology* 33, no. 1 (1999): 39–41.

multiplication of apertures both aerates the room and creates an impression of greater volume.

The house provided an elegant but modest living space, one flexible enough to accept new investments over time while strictly limited in size and scale. The house features indoor plumbing and a laundry chute—new amenities in 1905. But it did not come bundled with central radiant heat. Instead, the Aufderheides initially heated their home with coal-burning fireplaces, hauling scuttles from the basement much like their working-class counterparts. Later during their tenure in the house, they converted the fireplaces to gas, installing a new network of gas piping and taps. Eventually, they installed central radiant heating, a high-cost feature of substantial comfort and an important marker of middle-class status.⁵¹ The house records successive overlays of technologies and systems such as gas lighting, central heat, knob and tube electric wiring, telephone connections, and automobile storage, acquired over many decades.⁵²

Architecture, street improvement, and planning did not determine the behavior of residents like the Aufderheides, nor were the dwellings of Tower Grove purpose-built to engender class presumptions, ethnic allegiances, or indeed any singular grouping. Indeed, speculative-built urban housing bears only a loose relationship to the cultural values and beliefs of inhabitants. Since urban housing is an obdurate commodity, successive waves of individuals, families, and social groups move through landscapes that they did not originally build. Yet these sequent occupants always transform the neighborhoods they inhabit, leaving their mark, however faint or imperceptible. Every city today is a repository of such accumulated changes. The designed and developed landscape of Tower Grove framed a series of urban spaces that appealed to a broad cross-section of individuals and families with particular needs, around which grew the many and varied social practices of quotidian public culture.⁵³

⁵¹ Mark Rose, *Cities of Light and Heat: Domesticating Gas and Electricity in America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 68–75, 98–105.

⁵² The most recent system folded into the bones of the house is “Wi-Fi”—wireless internet capability, installed in 2003. I used this system to check citations, download drafts, and submit a draft version of this article to *Winterthur Portfolio*.

⁵³ Borchert, *Alley Life in Washington*; Brand, *How Buildings Learn*; Larry Ford, *The Spaces between Buildings* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); Joseph Sciorra, “Return to the Future: Puerto Rican Vernacular Architecture in New York,” in *Re-presenting the City: Ethnicity, Capital, and Culture in the Twenty-First Century Metropolis*, ed. Anthony King (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 60–92; Sandweiss, *St. Louis*, 141.

Space, Place, and the Material Culture of Urban Living

The democratic character of the middling housing stock around Tower Grove Park unfolded in tension with nearby elite neighborhoods of high-style architecture. This tension suggests a lens through which to read the Aufderheide home and its yield of artifacts.⁵⁴ Situated against one another, the building and the paper fragments form a mutually constitutive archive, one that reveals the elated yet anxious world that the petite bourgeoisie carved out for itself in the early twentieth-century city.

W. D. and Agnes Aufderheide comforted themselves in a modest quarter of St. Louis. They resided at the margin of the old walking city, but their streetcar settlement provided the density and mix that made Tower Grove a new walking neighborhood. Dr. Aufderheide’s pharmacy and social club, as well as the shops, recreation, and services upon which his family relied, were all within a one-half mile radius of their home. At the same time, the nearby Compton, Tower Grove, and Market streetcar lines kept them connected to the wider commercial and civic life of the city—particularly to the bustling department stores of downtown St. Louis.

Wilhelm Dietrich Aufderheide was born in St. Louis on July 30, 1875, the fifth child of Friederich W. and Mina Aufderheide. Friederich and Mina immigrated to the United States from Westphalia, Prussia, in 1869 with three young sons in tow, Henry, August, and Friederich. They had at least two more sons, Edward and Wilhelm, once they settled in St. Louis. Friederich found work as a laborer, and Mina (according to the 1880 Census) kept house in their tenement apartment at 1618 Carroll Street, one block east of Lafayette Park near downtown St. Louis. The family maintained the umlaut in their surname up to the 1880 U.S. Census, but all subsequent documents and references drop this vestige of German spelling. After a decade in St. Louis, we can assume that the Aufderheides had begun the long process of accommodation to American culture. Friederich passed away on the Fourth of July in 1888 while still residing on Carroll

⁵⁴ Here I am indebted to the work of Clifford Clark, James Borchert, and Susan Borchert. See Clifford Clark, “Domestic Architecture as an Index to Social History,” in *Material Life in America, 1600–1860*, ed. Robert Blair St. George (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988); and James Borchert and Susan Borchert, “Downtown, Uptown, Out of Town: Diverging Patterns of Upper-Class Residential Landscapes in Buffalo, Pittsburgh, and Cleveland, 1885–1935,” *Social Science History* 26, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 311–46.

Street; W.D. was only 13 years old when his father died.⁵⁵

Agnes Anna Pavelec was born in March of 1877 in St. Louis and grew up in a first-generation household, the daughter of Bohemian immigrants from the Austrian empire. Her parents, Frank and Anna Pavelec, came to the United States as young children, part of an early wave of Bohemians fleeing the wars and revolutions of Central Europe.⁵⁶ Frank Pavelec ran a grocery store in the old tenement neighborhood of Soulard, and the family resided for a number of years on Menard Street, near bustling Soulard Market and the campus of St. John Nepomuk Church. Czech families organized the parish in 1854 and erected the first Bohemian Catholic church outside of the homeland. With its sanctuary, school, rectory, and clubhouse, St. John Nepomuk was the center of Bohemian life in mid-to late nineteenth-century St. Louis, though many of the émigrés brought with them a deep strain of anticlericalism.⁵⁷ In 1896 a massive tornado destroyed most of the original buildings of St. John Nepomuk, but the residents of “Bohemian Hill” quickly raised funds to rebuild and expand the complex. Meanwhile, Bohemian families migrating southwest out of the old neighborhood organized a new parish in 1895, St. Wenceslas, named for the Czech national hero. The tornado hastened the exodus of Bohemians, and the Pavelecs moved into the new St. Wenceslas parish.

It was at St. Wenceslas that Agnes Pavelec married W. D. Aufderheide on January 11, 1899.⁵⁸ Dr. Aufderheide had recently established himself in practice, living above his shop at 2754 Arsenal Street. Agnes and W.D. began married life as renters at 1618 Carroll Street, the very same tenement wherein W.D. passed his childhood years. On September 20, 1904, they made the bold move of purchasing land and building a house. They selected parcel W-30'-Lot-16 in city block 1449 in the Switzer Place subdivision of Tower Grove Heights, owned by Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company of Hartford. They paid \$1,320 for the

⁵⁵ St. Louis Death Record, Records of Death in St. Louis, Missouri (RDSL), 29, C 646-3, 322.

⁵⁶ Ruth Crawford, *The Immigrant in St. Louis*, Studies in Social Economics, vol. 1, no. 2 (St. Louis: Faculty of the School of Social Economics, 1916), 11-12.

⁵⁷ National Register of Historic Places, St. John Nepomuk Parish Historic District, 1972, Register no. 72001558. Anticlericalism developed in early nineteenth-century Bohemia as a reaction to the imposition of Catholicism as the state religion by the Habsburg rulers.

⁵⁸ *Records of Application for Marriage Licenses in the City of St. Louis*, bk. 54, p. 122, Record 78944.

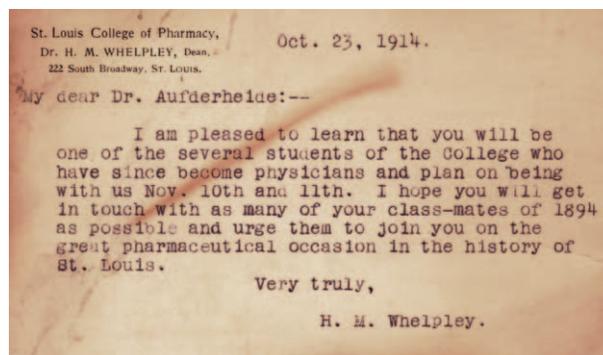


Fig. 5. Postcard from H. M. Whelpley to Dr. Aufderheide, October 23, 1914.

property outright, deeding it in Agnes’s name. Whether they or Connecticut Mutual Life engaged Henry Schaumberg to design the “improvement” of 3456 Magnolia Avenue is unclear, but by 1905 the house was complete, and the Aufderheides moved in. There they resided for the next twenty years, raised their daughter Gertrude, prospered, and connected with the middle-class public culture of Tower Grove.

W. D. Aufderheide’s career as a pharmacist and physician spanned 46 years. He studied at the St. Louis College of Pharmacy, where he took his degree in 1894 (fig. 5). He then enrolled at the Marion Sims College of Medicine, and completed his medical degree in 1898.⁵⁹ With two professional credentials in hand, he set up a medical practice and pharmacy in a corner commercial building at 2754 Arsenal, serving a largely working-class population in the surrounding tenements and apartment buildings. Dr. Aufderheide did well enough that in 1910 he was able to move his practice from the 2700 block of Arsenal to the 3100 block. The distance of the move—four blocks—was short, but crossing Gravois Boulevard not only meant that the pharmacy was closer to his home, it also gave Dr. Aufderheide access to a more prosperous, middle-class clientele.⁶⁰ The income from a small practice afforded the Aufderheides the means to live well in a complex, crowded, and clamorous city.

The Aufderheide family wove together an everyday life with the materials available to the emerging middle class. The dual archive of the dwelling and its yield of paper artifacts reveal a visual and material

⁵⁹ *Necrologies*, vol. 29, Missouri Historical Society Special Collections, 52.

⁶⁰ The building that housed W. D. Aufderheide’s first practice, 2764 Arsenal Street, no longer exists. However, the attached commercial buildings that housed his practice from 1910 to 1940, 3101-03 Arsenal, still stand at the corner of Arsenal and California Streets.

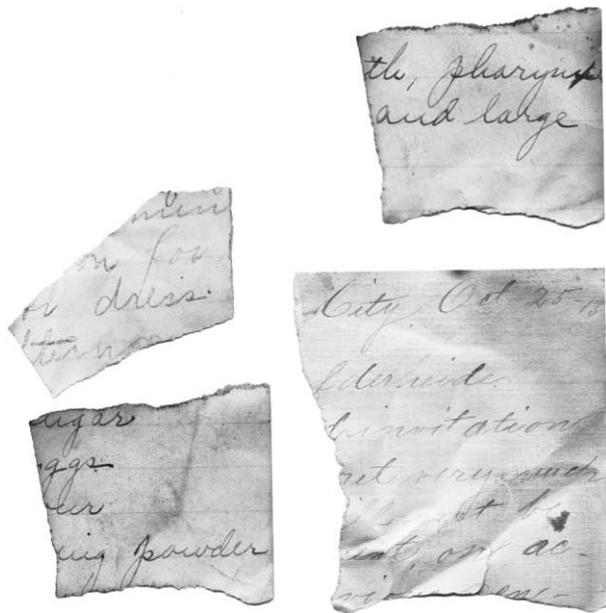


Fig. 6. Fragments of handwritten notes bearing the word “dress” (upper left), a grocery list with baking ingredients (lower left), the word “pharynx” (upper right), and an invitation and a regret, October 25, 1915 (lower right).

culture of images and things, an interpenetration of consumer goods, advertisements, billets, and receipts that connected the household to the wider world.⁶¹

Most of the young, second- and third-generation German American professionals hailed from the older, crowded districts of the city. Their immigrant, laboring parents had worn deep grooves between the factory, the tenement, and the church. They had inhabited distinctly homosocial worlds, with stark gender divisions of labor, household production, family life, and leisure time.⁶²

While many of these patterns persisted in the new lives that the Aufderheides carved out at the end of the Tower Grove streetcar line, much had also changed. Household production, while still largely the purview of Agnes Aufderheide, was

⁶¹ Marina Moskowitz, “Public Exposure: Middle-Class Material Culture at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” in *The Middling Sorts: Explorations in the History of the American Middle Class*, ed. Burton Bledstein and Robert Johnston (New York: Routledge, 2001), 170–75.

⁶² There is a robust literature on gender, class, and leisure time, though little on the St. Louis context. Readers may consult Katherine Corbett’s excellent and encyclopedic reference work, *In Her Place*, 124–129, 160–169. For case studies, see Madelon Powers, *Faces along the Bar: Lore and Order in the Workingman’s Saloon, 1870–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*; Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870–1920* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Sharon Wood, *The Freedom of the Streets: Work, Citizenship, and Sexuality in a Gilded Age City* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).



Fig. 7. Dairy delivery order card.

nevertheless abetted by a plethora of services that enabled the outsourcing of functions. With gas taps, central heating, and internal plumbing, Agnes did not have to procure and store cooking fuels or carry buckets from room to room.⁶³ The volume and organization of space within 3456 Magnolia differed markedly from that of the older tenements. Architect Henry Schaumberg designed the modest townhouse for the circulation of day servants, incorporating a butler’s pantry, a swinging door into the dining room, and a narrow back stairwell communicating between the kitchen and the second-floor hallway. Moreover, the Aufderheide home reflects a relaxation in gender divisions more typical of the companionate family ideal that was emerging in the early twentieth century.⁶⁴ The interior spaces supported multiple, overlapping functions, interpenetrated by the traffic of private familial activity, laboring servants, and the accumulations of public commerce in the form of goods, printed materials, furnishings, and appurtenances.⁶⁵

Of course, commercial goods did not simply appear in the home; rather, the Aufderheides procured their comestibles, durables, and other

⁶³ This is not to suggest that these innovations in architecture and interior provision diminished Agnes Aufderheide’s overall household labor time. Ruth Schwartz Cowan argues that time gains made in one area of household labor were often countervailed by increases in time demands in other areas. See Ruth Schwartz Cowan, “Coal Stoves and Clean Sinks: Housework between 1890 and 1930,” in Foy and Schlereth, *American Home Life, 1880–1930*, 211–15.

⁶⁴ Steven Mintz, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York: Free Press, 1989), 107–9.

⁶⁵ Beverly Gordon, “Woman’s Domestic Body: The Conceptual Conflation of Women and Interiors in the Industrial Age,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 31, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 281–301.



Fig. 8. Labels from Christmas packages.

requirements within a political and moral economy that structured desires, choices, and division of tasks. While Agnes or Gertrude compiled grocery lists for the daily larder (fig. 6, lower left), they likely handed over the task of shopping to the day help. Food was in plentiful supply at nearby grocers, butchers, bakers, and spice shops except during the Great War, when staples were rationed and specialty items largely unavailable. Dairy products came via door-to-door delivery every few days (fig. 7). Periodically, more specialized commodities entered the home through the rituals of holiday gift exchange. Christmas gifts, along with the labels adorning them, provided an opportunity for givers and receivers to signify relationships, to reinforce kith and kin networks, and to circulate commodities through those networks (fig. 8).

Much of the work of clothing the family remained in the household. Mrs. Aufderheide and

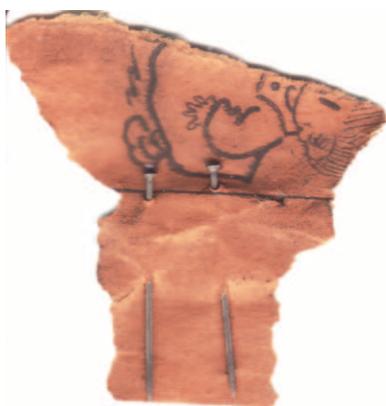


Fig. 9. Two straight pins in a makeshift or improvised newspaper jacket with a printed cartoon element.

BROADWAY LAUNDRY CO.
 615-617-619-621-623-625 BARTON STREET.
 Phone, Bell Sidney 1501 Phone, Kinloch Victor 1029
 Ordinary Mending and Sock Darning Free of Charge.
 NO CLAIMS ALLOWED unless accompanied by Original list.

W.D.A. Mr. Aufderheide

SHIRTS	Plain Negligee	10c	
	Plain with cuffs	12½c	13
	Negligee with cuffs		
	Pleated Fancy or with collar		
	Pleated with cuffs	15c	45
	Dress Hand Work		
	Night Shirts	10c	
	Collars	3c (fancy 5c)	6
	Culfs	2½c	64
	Undershirts, woolen	10c	
" " cotton	8c		
Drawers, cotton	8c		
" " woolen	10c		
Union Suits, cotton	15c		
" " woolen	20c		
Pajamas	20c up		
Handkerchiefs	2½c (silk) 5c		
ties	5c		
socks	25c up		
unders	10c		
trousers	15c		
waistcoats	3c up		
vests	25c up		
coats	25c up		
trousers	25c up		
skirts	25c up		
blouses	15c up		
set Covers	10c up		
aprons	5c up		
linen (in lots of 10, 3c)	4 to 5c		
Pillow Slips	2 to 5c		
Spreads	10c up		
" " fringe or fancy	15c up		
Towels	1c up		
Rollers	2c up		
Bath	2c up		
Table Cloths	5c up		
Napkins	1c up		

LACE CURTAINS A SPECIALTY.
 Not responsible for Jewelry left in garments.
 Unless Customers list accompanies Bundle to check against, our count must be accepted as correct.

BOX

NOTICE: ALWAYS MOISTEN BUTTON HOLE BEFORE BUTTONING.

Fig. 10. Broadway Laundry Co. order ticket for W. D. Aufderheide.



Fig. 11. Fragments from a railway timetable (upper left), fine decorative paper from an envelope interior (left, center, two pieces), newspaper (center), and envelope with cellophane address window (lower left); Imperial Crown Perfumery “World’s Fair” trading stamp (center of upper row); silver tape wrapped around a cardboard disk (upper right); splinter of wood (center, right); and fragment of an envelope addressed to Aufderheide with St. Louis postmark and return and a World War I-era cancellation legend (lower right).

her day help spent many hours mending tears and sewing buttons, conserving straight pins in makeshift contrivances (fig. 9). At the same time, with improved laundering services and industrial economies of scale in dry cleaning, the family began to send a portion of its clothes out for cleaning. As a

workaday professional, Dr. Aufderheide dressed himself in shirts with new-fangled attached cuffs, though he still preferred to purchase his collars separately. A typical laundry bill for cleaning and pressing four shirts and two collars came to sixty-four cents before the post–World War I inflation (fig. 10).

Dr. Aufderheide’s pharmacy and medical practice were located in a corner commercial building seven blocks from home, so he was able to walk to work and return home for lunch. For in-town business travel, he used St. Louis’s famed—if thoroughly corrupt—mass transit system.⁶⁶ He could catch a streetcar either at Shenandoah and Arkansas near



Fig. 12. Pullman Company train ticket from Kansas City to St. Louis.

⁶⁶ On corruption in the municipal charter streetcar companies, see Elizabeth Noel Schmidt, “Civic Pride and Prejudice: St. Louis Progressive Reform” (MA thesis, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 1986).

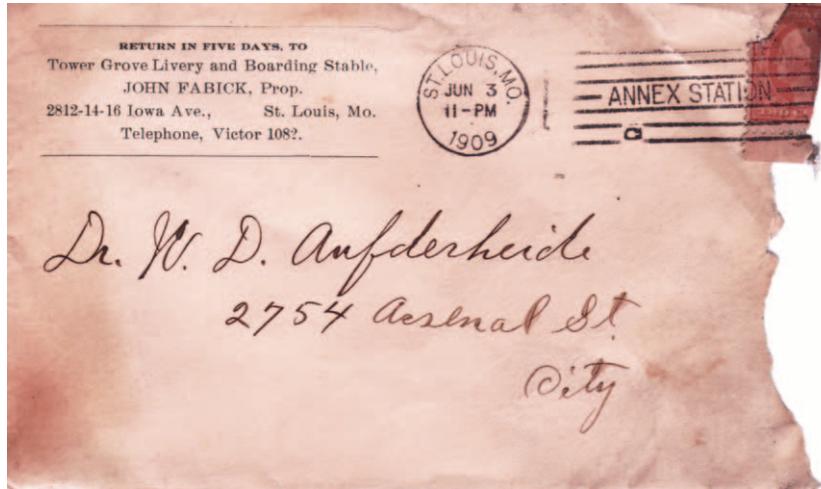


Fig. 13. Envelope from Tower Grove Livery and Boarding Stable to Dr. Aufderheide, June 3, 1909.

his house, or on Arsenal Street near his offices. Once in awhile, he had to take longer trips to Kansas City or Chicago for professional meetings. For these, he consulted the railway timetables (fig. 11, top left), purchased a ticket (fig. 12), and stretched out in the comfort of a Pullman car.

Dr. Aufderheide also required more flexible in-town transportation, either for making house calls or for taking the family on short excursions through the city parks. As late as 1909, the Aufderheide family kept a horse and trap at the Tower Grove Livery and Boarding Station, about one half of a mile from the house, a service for which they were billed periodically (fig. 13). Sometime around 1914, however, the family acquired their first automobile. They serviced the vehicle at the nearest Pierce Oil Filling Station, located at the intersection

of Grand Avenue and Caroline Street (fig. 14). By 1920, the Aufderheides had added a fine new brick garage.

When the long day of laundry, shopping, baking, and drug dispensing was done, the Aufderheides retired to an evening of relaxation. On cold evenings, they lit the coal fires in the living room and dining room, closed the large pocket doors, and drew curtains across the windows and doorways to conserve heat. They passed the time catching up on correspondence (figs. 6, 11, lower right, 13, 15), reading the newspaper (see fig. 11, center), or playing cards (fig. 16). Dr. Aufderheide might review case notes from the day's work (see fig. 6, upper right), while Mrs. Aufderheide mended socks (see fig. 9) or instructed Gertrude on piano in preparation for an upcoming recital (fig. 17).

Telephones: Main 196 & 196
Central 545 & 610

ST. LOUIS, April 17, 1914

We quote you subject to change without notice Automobile Gasoline:

	At Filling Stations St. Louis	Tank Wagon Delivery St. Louis
Pennant Auto Gasoline	12½c Per Gal.	12½c Per Gal.
No 2 Auto Gasoline	14½c " "	14½c " "
No 1 Auto Gasoline	16c " "	16c " "
Pennant Auto Lub. Oil. (Bulk 5 Gallons or more)		28c Per Gal.

FILLING STATIONS

1—Washington and Walton	5—13th and Gratiot Sts.
2—Grand Ave. and Dodier St.	6—Grand Ave. and Caroline St.
3—East Grand Ave. and 2nd St.	7—4472 Hunt Ave.
4—16th and Locust Sts.	8—Kansas and Michigan
9—Skinker and Clayton Roads	11—Clayton, Mo., 1 block north Autenreiths Hotel.
	12—Kirkwood, Mo.

A full line of Auto Oils, Greases, Waste, etc. is carried at these Stations.
Telephone your orders, or salesman will call on request.

Yours truly,
PIERCE OIL CORPORATION
SUCCESSOR TO THE
WATERS PIERCE OIL CO.

Fig. 14. Advertising circular for Pierce Oil Corporation filling stations.

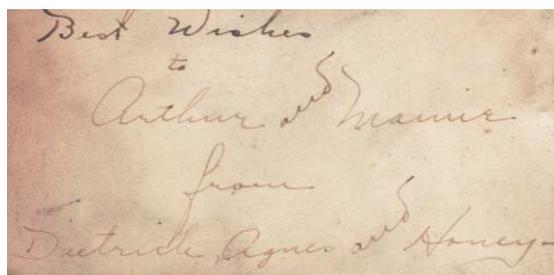
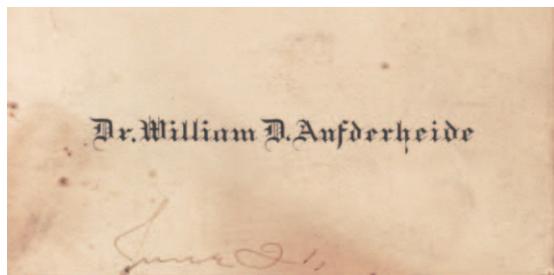


Fig. 15. Front and back of the printed calling card of Dr. William D. Aufderheide, bearing a handwritten salutation from [Dr. Wilhelm] Dietrich, Agnes, and Honey to Arthur and Mamie.

Forging Identity and Connectivity in Daily Urban Life

Carving out a social space of their own, apart from both the elite and the working class, petit bourgeois men and women remade the very nature of civic life and public culture in the great city. As a pharmacist and head of a middle-class household, Dr. Aufderheide earned enough income through this productive activity to dispose into the various services, shops, and goods required to run the home. An ever-increasing volume of commercial advertising across a spectrum of media reminded and cajoled the Aufderheides to spend their money on a wide array of purchases. This disposable income and mass-mediated advertising fueled a quiet revolution in American class relations and reshaped the quality of urban experience around what Liz Cohen has termed “a consumer republic.”⁶⁷

Much of this urban experience was powered by an unrelenting effort among middle-class families to pursue their cherished individualism through connection to broader civic and commercial net-

⁶⁷ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage, 2003). Also see Andrew Heinze, “From Scarcity to Abundance: The Immigrant as Consumer,” in *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader*, ed. Lawrence B. Glickman (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 190–206; T. J. Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic, 1994), 196–215.



Fig. 16. Fragment of a box of Universal Playing Cards, heavy dimpled cardstock with embossed lettering.

works. The Aufderheides read at least one daily newspaper (see fig. 11, center), and very likely two or three, perhaps even one in German, the language of their parents. They kept ties to school networks; twenty years after graduating from the St. Louis College of Pharmacy Dr. Aufderheide remained active in the school’s alumni gatherings and celebrations (see fig. 5).⁶⁸

For a class newly aware of its presence on the landscape, the visual registers of success and social differentiation were all the more crucial. Fashion in clothing, then, took on an almost hyperreal importance in the daily life of the urban petite bourgeoisie. Formulations and reformulations of clothing styles constituted an ever-shifting envelope of adornment, a set of material signatures and visual codes by which families could inscribe status in social time and space.⁶⁹ The owning classes purchased their fragile, sartorial finery from Chicago, New York, and

⁶⁸ In fact, Dr. Aufderheide would go on to serve as president of the Veteran Druggists’ Association, a professional organization with close ties to the St. Louis College of Pharmacy. See *Necrologies*, vol. 29, Missouri Historical Society Special Collections, 52.

⁶⁹ Early work on the symbolism of fashion emerged from semiotics, particularly the work of Roland Barthes, who characterized fashion in clothing as a second-order sign system. See Roland Barthes, *Système de la mode* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967). More recent scholarship places fashion within the context of discourse, spectacle, performance, multivocality, and nationhood: Carol Mattingly,



Fig. 17. Advertisement for recital at the Strassberger Conservatories of Music, May 1915.

Paris, while the workers in their factories clothed themselves in coarse, ungainly but long-lasting canvas and denim wares.⁷⁰ The emerging middle class, however, had to purchase their way to fashionability through industrial economies of scale. With mass-produced fashion, they distinguished themselves from factory workers, purchasing clothes produced by that very class in clanging, toxic, dirty factories. Their clothes simultaneously distanced them from and yoked them to the industrial order—an order they both loathed and depended on for their lifestyle.

Indeed, clothes constituted a system of meaning for middle-class men and women like W. D. and Agnes Aufderheide. Clothes circulated within market economies of purchase and ongoing care and service, as well as within visual economies of fashion, taste, and display. A bill of sale for Mrs. Aufderheide indicates that when she purchased clothing and accoutrements, she spent heavily—at least \$116 in one visit to the Famous-Barr department store downtown (fig. 18). These were not, of course, handmade fineries from the boutiques of Chicago, New York, or Paris; such fashions were clearly beyond the financial reach of Agnes Aufderheide and other petit bourgeois women. But through industrial economies of scale in production and distribution, as well as the managed complexity of merchandis-

ing and service localized in department stores like Famous-Barr, middle-class women could construct wardrobes by combining mass-produced items with on-site tailoring services.⁷¹

Advertisements of the period announced the latest wares of a manufacturer or retailer. “Spring Suitings Just Arrived,” proclaimed Newman-Schneck, Powers-Joyce Merchant Tailors; “it will be to your advantage to call early and inspect our assortment.” Located in downtown St. Louis near the grand new public library building, the merchants promised middle-class consumers a line of “good clothes” purchased in an opulent downtown setting, with prices remaining “the same as they have always been” (fig. 19). Price stability was an important consideration for the cost-conscious middle class. Newly patented industrial processes such as “Cravenette” fabric finishing promised to help preserve the “shape and appearance” of clothes (fig. 20), which in turn meant lower long-term costs for clothing men, women, and children.

But advertisements did not simply remind families to spend money; they also coded visual instructions on class and gender presentation.⁷²

Appropriate(ing) Dress: Women's Rhetorical Style in Nineteenth-Century America (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002); Linda Welters and Patricia Cunningham, *Twentieth-Century American Fashion* (New York: Berg, 2005).

⁷⁰ Useful for details and comparisons is the illustrated compendium created by Jean Druessedow of advertisements by the Mitchell Co., *Men's Fashion Illustrations from the Turn of the Century* (New York: Dover, 1990).

⁷¹ Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890–1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988); William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1994).

⁷² Literature on masculine fashion tends to focus on the social elite, but recent work points to broader analysis and reading strategies. See, e.g., Christopher Breward's superlative studies of the British urban fashion context: *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life, 1860–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), *The Culture of Fashion: A New History of Fashionable Dress* (Manchester: Manchester University Press; New

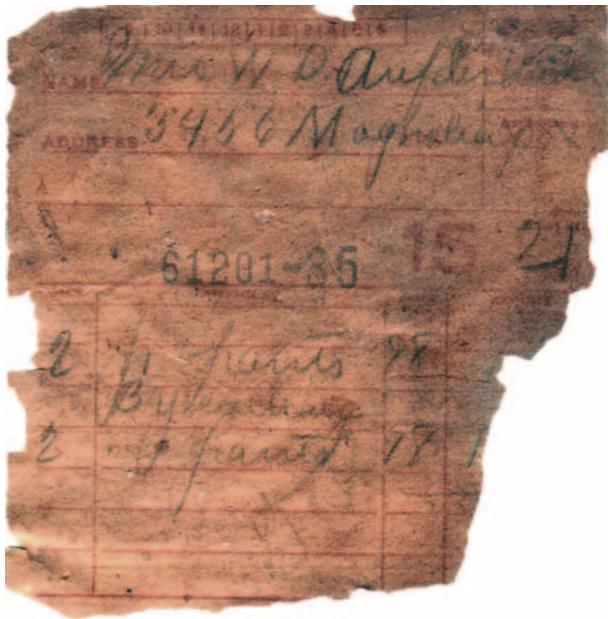


Fig. 18. Fragment of a bill from Famous-Barr department store for Mrs. W. D. Aufderheide. The items appear to be two pairs of pants for \$98 “By [February?]” and two pairs of pants for \$18, a total of \$116.

Jauntiness and an affected informality were the order of the day for white-collar professional men. Bowler hats, homburgs, and later straw boaters took on a rakish tilt, while the ever-present walking stick stood ready for promenading (fig. 21). A three-color printed envelope depicts a nattily dressed young man, displaying himself amid the pastoral environs of a park landscape. His willowy frame and the tilt of his limbs hint at a softened masculinity, as if newfound affluence and shifting class status might literally reform the body as it promenades through space (fig. 22). At the same time, circulars announcing club events included instructions on dress for the occasion. A reminder for the Tower Grove Turn Verein’s Dinner Dance includes a silhouette of a man clad in formal evening wear (fig. 23). A coupon from Famous-Barr department store exhorts the entire family to formalize their public display and to record their performance of middle-class identity through a “beautiful black and white oiled portrait made from any photograph,” free with a purchase of a frame (fig. 24).⁷³

York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 185–219, and “Sartorial Spectacle: Clothing and Masculine Identities in the Imperial City, 1860–1914,” in Felix Driver and David Gilbert, *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press; New York: Palgrave, 2003), 238–50.

⁷³ Shawn Michelle Smith, *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 8, 55–61, 69–70, 93–95.



Fig. 19. Fashion advertisement mail circular from Newman-Schneck, Powers-Joyce Merchant Tailors, St. Louis garment district.

Middle-class men and women pursued further connections through an active club life. Turnverein were particularly important for the German petite bourgeoisie. The old working-class turnverein was a dark, dingy male domain, little more than a tavern with a scattering of gymnastic equipment. But the



Fig. 20. Merchandise tag from a “Cravenette” finished item of clothing.



Fig. 21. Detail from fashion Merchant Tailors advertising mail circular.

newer versions that cropped up among second- and third-generation middle-class Germans were feminized spaces, with a range of activities for women, children, and entire families. With their gymnasia, baths, dinner halls, reading parlors, and ballrooms, the turnverein stood at the center of middle-class German neighborhood and ethnic identity.⁷⁴

W. D. and Agnes Aufderheide belonged to the Tower Grove Turn Verein, located on Grand Avenue in South St. Louis. They attended its numerous functions, from dances and children's events, to the great annual masked ball—except when wartime rationing curtailed nighttime events (see fig. 23). This particular turnverein, unlike its predecessors, did not occupy a traditional *turner halle*, but rather used the rooms, offices, and facilities of the Liederkranz Club (fig. 25). Completed in 1907, the Liederkranz Club building stretched its long, three-story facade along Grand between Victor Street and Magnolia Avenue. Its commodious volume contained game rooms, three dining halls, bowling

⁷⁴ Roland Binz, "German Gymnastic Societies in St. Louis, 1850–1913: Emergent Socio-cultural Institutions" (MA thesis, Washington University-St. Louis, 1983); John Anthony Karl, "A History of the Saint Louis Turnverein Societies, 1848 to 1948" (MA thesis, Northeast Missouri State Teachers College, 1966).

alleys, lounging and reading parlors, meeting rooms, concert and dance halls, a rehearsal stage, and a music library.⁷⁵ Dr. Aufderheide even served on the board of directors (fig. 26, left) and was active as a member of the Central Council of the Royal Arcanum, an associated fraternal lodge (fig. 26, right).⁷⁶

Even in private leisure moments, the Aufderheides swam in wider currents; the material culture of their home life connected them to a vast, interconnected world of goods and information.⁷⁷ At home of an evening, they passed the time reading the paper or reviewing the daily advertising circulars that came by post (fig. 27, also see figs. 11, lower left, 14, 19, 26). On a long winter night they would light their gas lamps, brew a pot of coffee, and play card games (see fig. 16) such as pinochle and clabber, then popular among the German petite bourgeoisie.⁷⁸ Like working-class poker or Tripoli, these were games that required the exchange of money. However, unlike poker, where rough men tossed crude coins on the table in the smoky tavern, pinochle players set up in mixed-sex club rooms and parlors and used bidding as a genteel substitute for betting. Through bidding, the card players could mediate their money through the polite abstraction of points, where quiet tallies could be exchanged for currency or for checks drawn on capital banks.

Outside of their Magnolia Avenue townhouse, W. D. and Agnes Aufderheide had a wide array of diversions and entertainments at their disposal. A winter evening in January might find them attending the latest production of "The Isle of Bang," a "Tropical Extravaganza" performed by the Crescent

⁷⁵ Olson, *St. Louis Germans*, 257–61.

⁷⁶ Dr. Aufderheide would later serve as president of the South Side Kiwanis Club, a fraternal service organization dedicated to child health and welfare. See *Necrologies*, vol. 29, Missouri Historical Society Special Collections, 52.

⁷⁷ No period photographs of the Aufderheide home interior exist, but the nature of the furnishings and appurtenances can be gleaned from studies of turn-of-the-century households. Elizabeth Cohen applies such a reading strategy in her seminal piece "Embellishing a Life of Labor: An Interpretation of the Material Culture of American Working-Class Homes, 1885–1915," *Journal of American Culture* 3, no. 4 (Winter 1980): 752–75. For useful details of middle-class German American homes in St. Louis, see Proetz's memoir.

⁷⁸ See David Parlett, *The Oxford Guide to Card Games* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). Donna Braden argues that in the early decades of the twentieth century family leisure time became much more companionate and less segregated by age and gender. Donna Braden, "'The Family That Plays Together Stays Together': Family Pastimes and Indoor Amusements, 1890–1930," in Foy and Schlereth, *American Home Life, 1880–1930*, 145–52.



Fig. 22. Envelope advertising availability of spring and summer fashions for 1922.

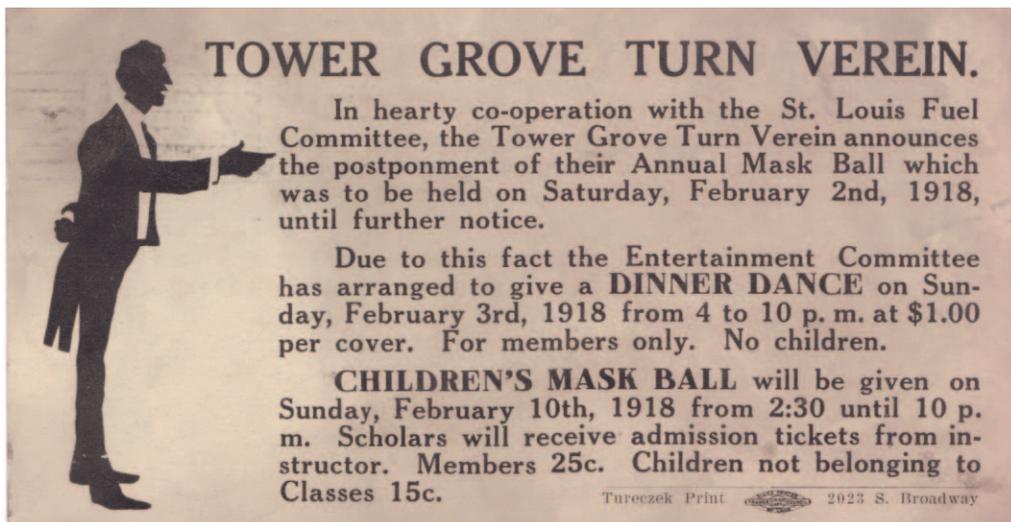


Fig. 23. Notification card, Tower Grove Turn Verein, February 1918. Cardstock bears seal of the Tureczek Print Company.



Fig. 24. Coupon from Famous-Barr department store for one free “oiled portrait made from any photograph.”

Musical Comedy Company at the Avalon Theater on South Grand (fig. 28). The Avalon competed for audiences with numerous other performance venues in the vicinity of Tower Grove Park, including the Park bandstand, the Liederkranz Club, and the Shenandoah Theater, completed in 1913.⁷⁹ They might have followed an early show in one of these venues with a sumptuous repast at Pelican’s Restaurant, founded in 1895 by Anton Griesedieck to provide south side German families with a first-class restaurant and “liquortorium.”⁸⁰

On warm spring evenings, the musically inclined Aufderheides very likely walked three blocks to the Strassberger Conservatory of Music to attend concert recitals (see fig. 17). Organized by Clemens Strassberger, the conservatory debuted in its spacious new location in 1904, with faculty offering “lessons in music, deportment, and dance to a large and growing middle- and upper-income German-American population.” As a point of ethnic and nationalist pride, architect O. J. Wilhemi adorned the facade of the three-story brick building with terra cotta busts of Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, and other great German composers.⁸¹

Concerts and plays provided perfect venues for the most important activity of all: seeing and being seen. And it was in the promenade (see fig. 22) that the petite bourgeoisie most effectively theatricalized their class status. The promenade, once a stuffy conger of strutting bourgeois couples, received a thorough airing out by the professionals, managers,

and white-collar office workers in the streetcar neighborhoods around Tower Grove Park.⁸²

Warm Sunday afternoons found entire families strolling in fashionable but sensible clothes down tree-lined walking paths of Tower Grove Park, sporting parasols, prams, and picnic baskets. Passing by gazebos and follies, they lingered at the greenhouse, fountain, and playground until reaching the wading pavilion, where the younger children enjoyed the cool waters. Topping off the day, the families gathered at the great bandstand to take in an all-brass concert by one of the many local music clubs (fig. 29).⁸³ The bandstand, designed by Eugene Greenleaf in 1872, featured an onion-domed pergola encircled by a wide path lined with trees and benches.⁸⁴ Along the circular path Greenleaf dedicated a series of cylindrical plinths to support busts of great European composers, including Germans Mozart, Beethoven, and Wagner. The dedication of improvements such as the West Entrance Gate Renovation (1908), the Clay Tennis Courts (1911), the Comfort Station Pavilion (1913), and the Pool Pavilion (1914) provided fresh circumstances for a day’s outing in the park.⁸⁵

Through this repeated use, petit bourgeois families laid primary claim to Tower Grove Park and all that it represented—leisure, sociability, aesthetic grace, and civic virtue. Though conceived by Henry Shaw as a temple for elite display, Tower Grove Park served as a powerful engine for middle-class enactments, a space for the working out of social and civic meanings. It provided families with a great stage set for the performance of a new urban public culture.

While the Aufderheides and their neighbors used the promenade to recalibrate norms of social interaction, pioneering a relaxed set of behavioral codes, they nonetheless scripted the performative boundaries of middle-class life and claimed urban space in the name of the petite bourgeoisie. As violent class warfare erupted periodically in the streets

⁸² The best examination of the institution of the promenade to date is David Scobey’s exquisite essay, “The Anatomy of the Promenade: The Politics of Bourgeois Sociability in Nineteenth-Century New York,” *Social History* 17, no. 2 (May 1992): 203–28.

⁸³ Grove, *Henry Shaw’s Victorian Landscape*, 151–54.

⁸⁴ Carolyn Hewes Toft with Lynn Josse, *St. Louis: Landmarks and Historic Districts* (St. Louis: Landmarks Association, 2002), 242–44.

⁸⁵ On the uses and early improvements to the park, see David MacAdam’s commissioned report, *Tower Grove Park of the City of St. Louis: Review of its Origin and History, Plan of Improvement, Ornamental Features, Etc.* (St. Louis: R. P. Studley & Co., Printers, 1883). Subsequent additions and renovations can be tracked on the city of St. Louis’s government information web site, <http://stlouis.missouri.org/parks/tower-grove/>.

⁷⁹ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, City of St. Louis, vol. 9.

⁸⁰ *The German-American Heritage in St. Louis*, 14.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 15.



Fig. 25. Postcard of Liederkranz Club, 2700 South Grand Avenue, completed 1907.

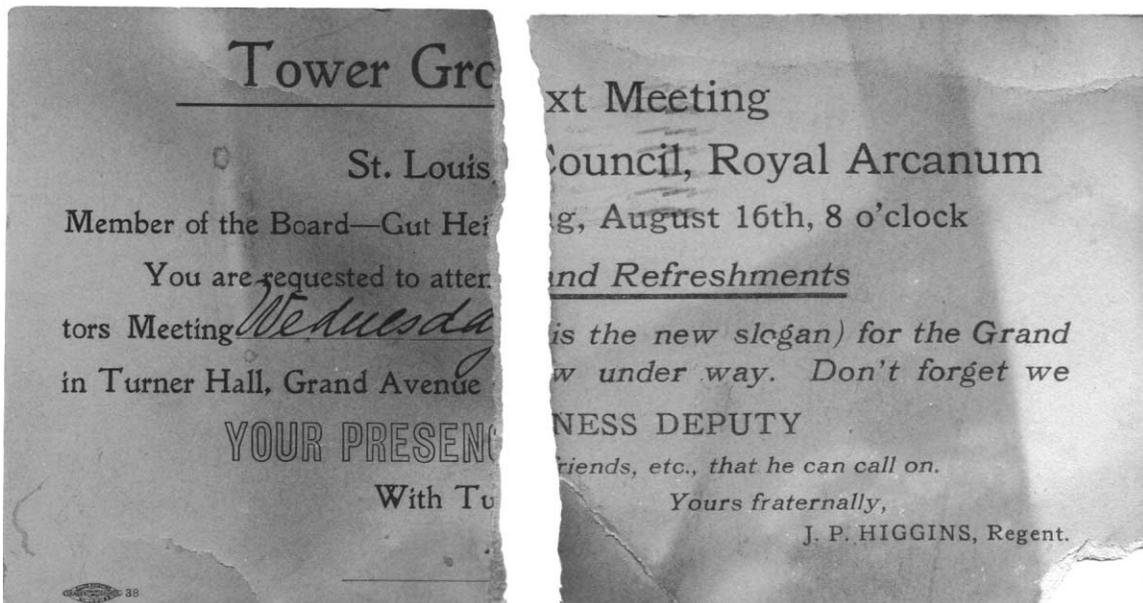


Fig. 26. Notification card, Tower Grove Turn Verein meeting (left). Cardstock bears seal of the Allied Printing Trades Council. Notification card, Royal Arcanum [Fraternal] Council meeting (right).



Fig. 27. Fragment of brochure for Marathon Tire Company.

of St. Louis, a quiet daily struggle for symbolic prominence unfolded in the public spaces of the city.⁸⁶ These behaviors and performances were tied intimately to a virtual explosion in consumer energy and a flood of goods, services, and fashions designed with great care to effect a carefree comportment, an ease of existence, and a distance from the furious industrial ethos that made this life possible. Indeed, for the Aufderheides and their neighbors, the consumption of goods and leisure services was inseparable from acts of social display, and an entire material culture developed around the visual registration of middle-class status (see figs. 19, 22, 27, 28).⁸⁷

The most significant challenge to the public culture and identity of the petite bourgeoisie in early twentieth-century St. Louis came with the onset of World War I, followed quickly by prohibition. The entry of the United States into the war against Germany in 1917 tormented the heart of St. Louis

⁸⁶ The built environment both reflects and shapes class relations, and it does so in moments of violent rupture, as with strikes and street protests, as well as in the seemingly innocuous activities of daily life. See David Harvey, "Labour, Capital, and Class Struggle around the Built Environment in Advanced Capitalist Societies," *Politics and Society* 5, no. 3 (1976): 288–93.

⁸⁷ The visual dimension is increasingly central to the performance of social class in the nineteenth century, particularly in the formation of racial identities out of multiethnic backgrounds and allegiances. See Shawn Michelle Smith, *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Andrea Volpe, "Cartes de Visite Portrait Photographs and the Culture of Class Formation," in Bledstein and Johnston, *The Middling Sorts*, 157–62.

public life, which had come to be dominated by German American identity, values, and institutions. In South St. Louis, as well as in numerous other German American enclaves such as Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and Cleveland, families had to recalibrate norms of ethnic allegiance, emphasizing notions of patriotism and "American-ness" in the face of hostility.⁸⁸ These calibrations must have been particularly difficult for the middle- and upper-class German Americans for whom Teutonic heritage and all of the towering accomplishments of German music, art, philosophy, and belles lettres constituted a central source of pride.⁸⁹ Ethnic salience persisted, but professional and entrepreneurial German Americans had to shift their emphasis to the latter half of their hyphenated identity, particularly if they aspired to greater station.

The Aufderheides and their neighbors, however ambivalent, seized the opportunity to display their American patriotism. Even though he was forty-two years old when the United States entered the Great War, W.D. made a deliberate point to report to his local police precinct to register for armed service. On September 12, 1918, he walked in to the Seventh District Police Station one block from his house at the corner of Magnolia and Grand Avenue, across from Tower Grove Park, and registered for the draft. Though it is unlikely he was ever called to active duty, given his age and the "heart trouble" that he reported on his registration card, it was nonetheless a gesture of Americanism by the son of Prussian immigrants.⁹⁰

Meanwhile, for the strength of the nation, the U.S. government instructed the Aufderheides and their neighbors not to waste food, as "food will win the war" (see fig. 11, lower right). They also did their part to conserve fuel resources. In February of 1918, for example, their local turnverein postponed the annual masked ball "in hearty cooperation

⁸⁸ Zane Miller, "Cincinnati Germans and the Invention of an Ethnic Group," in *Ethnic Diversity and Civic Identity: Patterns of Conflict and Cohesion in Cincinnati since 1820*, ed. Henry Shapiro and Jonathan Sarna (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 165–79; Wolfgang Helbich and Walter D. Kamphoefner, eds., *German-American Immigration and Ethnicity in Comparative Perspective* (Madison, WI: Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies, 2004); John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 78–92; Guido André Dobbert, *The Disintegration of an Immigrant Community: The Cincinnati Germans, 1870–1920* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1965).

⁸⁹ An excellent treatment of this dilemma facing German Americans can be found in Peter Conolly-Smith, *Translating America: An Immigrant Press Visualizes American Popular Culture, 1895–1918* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 193–215.

⁹⁰ Registration Card and Registrar's Report, Local Draft Board Division 14, St. Louis, Missouri, record 556-A889.

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Fig. 28. Page from a seasonal program of theater, cinema, and vaudeville, including advertisements for local goods and services.



Fig. 29. Postcard depicting Sunday crowd at the Tower Grove Park Bandstand, ca. 1905–10. Handwritten at lower left: “I spent Sunday here.”

with the St. Louis Fuel Committee” (see fig. 23). During wartime, such sacrifices became a routine feature of life and a ritual of civic participation, patriotism, and nation building—especially for German American families eager to demonstrate their loyalty.⁹¹

Anti-German sentiment ran high in St. Louis as citizens vented against the alien and the foreign within the body politic. The city changed many of its German street names in favor of Anglo-American heroes; Berlin Street became Pershing Avenue, and Bismarck Boulevard returned to its original role as Fourth Street.⁹² Schools and churches quickly abolished German language in instruction and liturgy, and German-language newspapers virtually ceased circulation. Individuals and families had to calculate how much of their German heritage to retain in public, or even whether to renounce ties to the home country. The Aufderheides chose the latter course. While on the 1910 census they reported their parents as having hailed from Germany and

Bohemia, on the 1920 census both W. D. and Agnes Aufderheide reported their parents’ place of origin as Missouri. Many of their neighbors in 1920 continued to claim German parentage, but the Aufderheides had made a calculated decision to disavow their heritage. Whether they did so out of disgust for German imperial expansion or fear of retribution from Anglo clients is impossible to discern.⁹³

Nevertheless, the public culture that these German American families created in South St. Louis at the turn of the century persisted, laying the foundation for modern, urban middle-class social and civic life. The explicit evocation of German heritage receded from public view after World War I and prohibition. Indeed, ethnic historian Audrey Olson has argued that it was prohibition, more than the Great War, that gutted German identity in South St. Louis. During the war, German Americans could assume the mantle of patriotism in support of the American cause; but prohibition struck to the core

⁹¹ David Detjen, *The Germans in Missouri, 1900–1918: Prohibition, Neutrality, and Assimilation* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985).

⁹² William and Marcella Magnan, *The Streets of St. Louis* (St. Louis: Virginia Publishing, 1996).

⁹³ On German American identity in urban place names and the U.S. Census, see Don Heinrich Tolzmann, *German-American Studies: Selected Essays* (New York: Lang, 2001), 147–49, 155–57.

of their identity and greatly diminished participation in turnverein, festivals, and club life. Prohibition also struck at the core of the livelihood of many German American families who earned their keep as brewers, beer distributors, and tavern owners.⁹⁴

And yet, by the 1920s German heritage and identity were no longer important for the quality of modern public culture; German American values already constituted the mainstream of civic life in South St. Louis. These values included a dynamic mix of political liberalism, social conservatism, market entrepreneurialism, racism, and religious parochialism. Despite the possibilities opened up through commercialism and consumer choices, these families nonetheless stayed a cautious course through modernity. They neither fully embraced the lure of Mammon, nor did they reject the trappings of consumer culture. Rather, they pursued their private aspirations through measured engagement with a range of urban nodes—from the market to the municipal park, from the home to the workplace, and from the quasi-public streetcar to the civic institutions that gave their lives meaning. In many ways, through their values, prejudices, and choices, and through their episodic westward movement from tenements to townhouses, these South St. Louisans laid the groundwork for the modern mass consumption, automobility, and private family life that would irrevocably transform the metropolis.

Conclusion

The brittle, sooty artifacts recovered from our laundry chute tell stories of an ongoing and incomplete effort among people to forge a richly layered urban public culture. But, unlike artifacts

processed into collections, catalogued into databases, and detached from their contexts, our trove was literally retrieved from the very home that consumed them. Situated within architecture, landscape, and the accumulated residues of place, our artifacts tell a story not of abstract public spheres or high-minded moral purposes. Rather, the artifacts reveal a set of public enactments lived close to home; they record one family's role in connecting to and creating a lively civic and commercial world. The artifacts provide insight into the lingua franca of an urban *passé imperfect*—a past present projected into the indeterminate future, lives and worlds in the making, now bodily absent but still present in the material residues of place.

The Aufderheides and their neighbors stitched together the raiments of a petit bourgeois city life—purposeful, productive, and pleasurable. Through the constant beating of paths between home, shop, laundry, park, club, recital hall, and streetcar stop, they assembled a middle-class public culture—a habit of the heart, a catalogue of dreams, a vision of the world. And yet, while they looked out onto the world with tentative satisfaction at their accomplishments, they found their daily lives rippling with anxiety along the dark, subterranean channels of modernity. Labor unrest, racial and ethnic panic, the instability of nations, and vagaries of international trade worried the comforts of middle-class families in Tower Grove. The architecture of their homes and the nature of their material leavings suggest profound inner conflicts and contradictory impulses. Amid the anxiety, however, they plied their disposable incomes into a thick network of civil, religious, and commercial institutions. Thus, they connected themselves to broader currents of commercial and civic life, and in the process remade the very terms of urban public culture in America.

⁹⁴ Olson, *St. Louis Germans*, 216–17, 228–31, 240–46.

