



136 South Main

117 South Main



NOMINEE

PENNY PITMAN

Penny Pitman is nominated by the Historic Landmark Preservation and Architectural Review Board with great respect and sincere appreciation for her total body of work in historic preservation and restoration to which she has made a life-long commitment. Her first historic district project, restoration of 416 South Main, was completed in 1975; but it is her work of the late 1980's, the 1990's and now into 2008 which has been transformative in its contribution to restoration and preservation in the Historic Downtown District (National Register Main Street extended 1991 and 1996).

As owner on numerous projects, and as partner in others, Penny has completed the renovation of thirteen commercial buildings in St. Charles National Register Historic Districts, most including full façade reconstruction returning the buildings to their original late 1800's and early 1900's designs. She has been involved in several important and early projects in downtown St. Louis, has completed two projects in St. Charles original residential neighborhoods, and several projects in St. Charles County. Her ability to recreate authentic store fronts and facades when little original exists, her correct and sensitive designs and attention to detail and use of materials sets her projects apart from others and establishes a standard of excellence which is an example for anyone embarking on similar efforts.

Penny's signature project, and one which has been widely recognized, is the restoration of 117 South Main, known as the IOOF Building (or Moose Building) completed in 1986. The IOOF Building has particular importance in the architectural history and identity of St. Charles. Constructed in 1878, the ornate Victorian design and prominent siting centered in the middle of the block between the original Court House and Market Place, later City Hall, established it as one of St. Charles' most identifiable structures. Though structurally sound, it had lost much of its ornamentation, all of its glitter, and 'modernizations' had left the interior unrecognizable as a spacious and beautiful place of social and civic importance. City officials had even proposed that it should be demolished and the land used for parking. Penny's renovation returned both the exterior and the interior of 117 South Main to the prominence the structure deserved, earning community respect for the restoration, and



213 North Main



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123 North Main



for her personal skill and commitment. She also received the 1987 St. Louis Homebuilders Association Homer Award “Best Commercial Restoration”, the Community Beautification Award and St. Charles Chamber of Commerce award for outstanding work in the restoration of the 117 South Main structure. The 117 property, noted as ‘St. Charles Odd Fellows Hall’ has been recognized with individual placement on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987.

Cited as her most ‘challenging’ façade project, 123 North Main included the removal of 1960’s façade and the restoration and reconstruction of an original 1907 Beaux Arts front. This structure is the only example of the artistic early use of stone on Main Street and since its restoration is easily recognized for its unique beauty. Securing appropriate materials, using them correctly and adapting other materials where necessary required new skills and imagination while remaining true to the original design.

In completing numerous other Main Street commercial façade restorations using remains of cast iron columns and other salvageable parts, Penny has perfected highly respected skills in the use of iron, wood and glass to recreate authentic storefronts and they are seen throughout the 100 South, 200 North, and 300 North blocks of our Historic District. Look for her use of historically accurate dark green and red as a Pitman trademark.

Penny Pitman served on the first Historic Downtown Architectural Review Board and subsequently for 11 years on the Historic Landmark Preservation and Architectural Review Board. She continues to advise in the design of new restoration projects and is often called upon for her expertise and ideas. She has served on the St. Charles Riverfront Advisory Commission 1986-1989 and the Board of Historic Downtown Association since 1995. Penny was the leader in the nomination submissions for Main Street 100 South block, and later 100-300 North blocks resulting in their placements on the National Register of Historic Places. And she was integral to the development of Architectural Guidelines for the Historic Downtown District. She continues to donate time and expertise to other St. Charles County projects including consulting on the restoration of the Flanders Callaway House, part of the Nathan Boone Property now owned by Lindenwood University. Following her Pitman/Boone family heritage, and just as they ‘blazed trails’, she has for 38 years been making her personal marks along the trail of historically accurate renovation and preservation in St. Charles.



201 North Main



105 North Main



208 North Main



416 South Main



116 South Main



215 North Main

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When You Wish Upon An Iron Star

Penny Pitman makes dreams come true on Main Street

Ever notice the iron stars along the sides of antiquated buildings in St. Charles and other historic places? You know the ones, with the trickle of dried rust running down the brick wall underneath them.

As it turns out, the iron ornaments were added to 19th century structures for reasons other than decoration. Constructed first in these buildings were the solid brick walls. Wooden floors were added to the interiors later. Large bolts ran between the walls for structural soundness, connected at either end with, you guessed it, iron stars.

There's a woman, a history buff really, in St. Charles who knows all about the iron ornaments, and a whole lot about historic structures as well. She named her business for them.

THIS PAGE

LEFT - 215 North Main Street is one of the buildings Pitman traded for after renovating 416 South Main, the old Salvation Army building.

MIDDLE - The Pitman family has a strong history in St. Charles County. Pictured on the right is "Buck" Pitman, Penny's grandfather.

RIGHT - One of Penny's current projects is 136 South Main Street, which was built in 1880. It has previously been home to the St. Charles Post Office, a meat locker, a hardware store, a grocery, and a newspaper publisher.

OPPOSITE PAGE

Penny has renovated 14 buildings along historic Main Street in St. Charles over the past 30 years.

Penny Pitman, of Iron Star, Inc., has renovated 14 buildings along Historic Main Street in St. Charles over the past 30 years. Her dedication to and concern for the things of the past has in large part changed the face of Historic Main Street.

After graduating college in 1967 with a degree in Journalism, Pitman worked for a book publisher in Chicago, IL. She soon returned home to St. Charles County, however, after realizing she missed the small town atmosphere and the foliage. "I didn't want to live where every tree had been planted by someone," she said.

A native of Wentzville, MO, Pitman returned to her roots and purchased a two-story Victorian house at 4th and McDonough in 1970 and began her first rehabilitation project. "At that time, bums were sleeping in the doorways in St. Charles," Pitman said. And the notion for an urban renewal project in the area was just beginning to take form, she said.

That was the rehabilitation of the first state capital building that would spawn the rebuilding and renovation of the entire historic downtown area.

Pitman began her own revitalization project with 416 South Main, the old Salvation Army building. From 9 to 5, she worked in graphic and product design for Falcon

Products. By night and weekend, she worked on her house. It took her a year and a half to finish the place, which went on to house two apartments and several retailers. "I began working on my house and I was intrigued by what the potential was down here," Pitman said.

Pitman kept the building for 20 years before trading it for 213 and 215 North Main, which today holds her office along with Dick Sacks, owner of The Sacks Group a Business/Management Consultant firm and a graphic design and Internet firm called Snap Creative, respectively.

Pitman also worked with several partners rehabilitating buildings in the Soulard and Central West End areas of St. Louis during the 1970's and 1980's. She even did some work on Laclede's Landing. But the St. Louis gig was short-lived, she said, as once again, St. Charles County was calling.

In 1985, Pitman bought the building at 117 South Main Street. The now burgeoning Quilogy enterprise occupies the building today. But, Pitman was the original designer before Randy Schilling, owner of Quilogy, purchased the building in the late 1990's from her. The building



has also seen such tenants as the humanitarian organization Friends In Sending Help (FISH), a printer, a newspaper, a tire broker, an art broker and even a boxing ring. Pitman said she went through that place "section at a time. It took me a year to do the outside. By the next year, the people were gone and I went through there section at a time."

The building was constructed in 1878, heated by a single boiler, and was at one time used for city detectives. The original 14-foot ceilings had been dropped to eight feet for energy efficiency and modernism at some point, she said.

Pitman said authenticity is important to her as she enters an old structure and attempts to recreate its majesty. "I get into the details and try to find out what should be there," she said. "I pay enough attention to find out what used to be and what should be now."

Pitman said she has watched the slow but phenomenal transformation of Historic Main Street in St. Charles for many years, recalling a time when she could have

In all her years of rehabilitating old and historic structures Pitman said she would most like to be remembered for what she didn't do—change things. "I've worked really hard to keep it real and to let the architecture talk for itself.

purchased houses along "Stone Row" on the east side of South Main for \$13,000 a piece. Today the buildings are worth more than a quarter million.

The building in which her office is located at 213 North Main Street was another gem under the surface. Like the Quillogy building, the ceilings had been dropped, but as she peeled back the surface, she found embossed tin plates with all the pageantry of the day. "The plaster was



a wreck so I exposed the brick. For the most part you can find the evidence of what was there before and fix it in some way or get something similar."

Pitman is currently working on 136 South Main Street, which was built in 1880. The building in its history held the St. Charles Post Office, a meat locker, a hardware store, a grocery, and a newspaper publisher.

her family to live and work in St. Charles County. Among them, a blacksmith, carpenter, well driller and others.

Pitman said she enjoys playing caretaker of the architecture of old. "I want to take care of them now. These are from a time when people had a real interest in expressing themselves through their buildings. You can almost see the old Victorian guy standing on the front porch and saying, 'That's my building. I built this. I had the Masons from St. Louis come and do the special brickwork'. These are things that give us a sense of being anchored, a context of who we are. There's a comfort level in being surrounded by old things that are well taken care of."

In all her years of rehabilitating old and historic structures Pitman said she would most like to be remembered for what she didn't do—change things. "I've worked really hard to keep it real and to let the architecture talk for itself. Sometimes I wonder what the kids growing up now are going to do. What will their architecture and social culture say for them? These buildings are not like Disney World that was built to entertain you, but this is a place where people really worked and sweat and lived."

Pitman said she may have made her fortune if she "didn't have the nasty habit of doing another building. I swear every time I'm never going to do another. It just seems like it needs you. It needs to be done."

ROBIN JEFFERSON

She compares a photo of the structure in its glory days to today. The decorative cornice in the center is missing. The back wall was falling out. The shop front was in disarray. When she finishes the approximately \$1 million endeavor, the building will look much like it did in the 19th century. She hopes to rent the space there to retailers and businesses which need office space.

Pitman said she comes from a long line of craftsmen and is the ninth generation of