



“Vanishing Views” of Littleton to be Shown

For over 30 years Littleton artist rita derjue has been fighting to preserve Littleton’s historic buildings. She’s spoken at city council meetings to advocate for the protection of Littleton’s landmarks. She helped raise funds to restore the Littleton Depot and the Town Hall Arts Center.

And, sadly, rita has also been “on the scene” with her watercolors to paint the historic houses of Littleton that have been demolished, often working as the bulldozers were beginning to raze them.

Historic Littleton Inc. is privileged to become the recipient of a collection of rita derjue’s watercolors that document the vanishing buildings and scenic views of Littleton.

Over 20 of these paintings will be displayed during an event at Hudson Gardens on May 14, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Several of the artworks will be auctioned to raise funds for HLI.

Historic Littleton is honoring rita for her life-time commitment to historic preservation by presenting her with the first Bruce F. Wolf award.

HLI President Mary Wolf said the HLI board was thrilled with derjue’s donation of art. Invitations to the event were mailed April 14. The cost is \$30 per person, or \$25 for current

HLI members. Hors d’oeuvres and wine will be served during the evening. Call 303-730-

2639 for more information.



Nationally renowned artist rita derjue painted the Stone house at 2546 W. Alamo before it was demolished in 1977. The site is now a parking lot.

Historic Littleton Inc. is dedicated to preserving the historical and architectural heritage of the greater Littleton area through advocacy and education.

Bemis House Restoration Scheduled for September

The Ed Bemis House will be getting a facelift with a new roof, refurbished windows and doors, and siding that more closely matches its original look.

Work will begin the second or third week of September, according to Mark Barons of the City of Littleton, and should take about two months.

In 2008 the City of Littleton accepted a \$198,483 grant

from the State Historical Fund and agreed to a \$93,904 cash match to restore Bemis House.

The grant will go towards replacing the roof with wood shingles, stabilizing the basement support system, redoing the lap siding, and rehabilitating the exterior doors and windows.

Once the exterior work is complete, the interior rooms will be refurbished, according to Cindy Hathaway, executive di-

rector of Western Welcome Week, the tenant in Bemis House.

The Littleton Rotary Club and Littleton Sertoma Club have each adopted a room to be restored on the main floor. Other civic groups are still needed; call Hathaway at 303-794-4870 to help.

Preservation Forums Bring Out Enthusiastic Crowd

A standing room only crowd attended two forums to discuss historic preservation at the Buck Center on Feb. 12 and 26.

Nearly 200 citizens and property-owners came to hear the True Grit of Historic Preservation, sponsored by Littleton's Historical Preservation Board and Historic Littleton, Inc.

At the first meeting, consultant Nore Winter presented the benefits of preservation. The group then divided into small groups to discuss what was important to preserve in Littleton.

Main Street, the courthouse and the depots were mentioned as important sites, as well as residential neighborhoods such as Littleton Heights and Aberdeen Village.

Comments ranged from "Keep downtown Littleton looking historic—don't let any big buildings come in" to "Why can't historic photos, history and surveys at the museum and library be on the Web?"

Another commented, "It's really about the buildings. They need to be protected and saved. Buildings are the multi-generational glues. Without buildings there is no past."

Participants asked for more information about Littleton's preservation code, for lists of buildings that are already designated, and about incentives.

Winters discussed incentives and design guidelines at the second forum.

All the comments written down at the forums will be forwarded to either the Planning Commission, the Historical Preservation Board,

the Business/Industry Affairs Committee or the City Council.

"Consider how S-L-O-W Littleton's historic preservation has developed compared to other Colorado cities and the nation," one person wrote. "What's wrong with Littleton?"

Littleton Mayor Doug Clark told HLI, "I think everyone at the meetings thinks historic preservation is a good thing. Once we get past that, though, there are widely differing viewpoints on how to achieve that."

Clark sees a difference between a historic district and an architectural control district. "If a building isn't historic, why should it be in a historic district?"

The next step will be for the HP board, the planning commission, and the city council to sit down and discuss preservation and downtown. "I'm hoping the COMPLAN revision will be the catalyst to drive that discussion," Clark said.

Preservation Notes

Historic Willowcroft Manor and its surrounding 9.6 acres were sold at auction on April 4 to a private individual. Future plans for the home designed by R.S. Roeschlaub and built in 1884 for Joseph Bowles are not known.

Artist rita derjue a Lifelong Preservation Advocate

Artist rita derjue and her husband Carle Zimmerman moved to Littleton in 1964. Besides raising their two children and having a flourishing career as an artist and teacher, rita took up advocacy on the side, often using her artwork to that end.



“I was a preserver of things before there was a name for it,” rita says.

In the 1960’s she advocated preserving the landscape of striking red rock formations in Roxborough State Park. After Littleton passed a historic preservation ordinance in 1971, rita served on the Museum Board (which functioned as the Historical Preservation Board at that time.)

The Museum Board researched a number of buildings and landmarked them, but the 1971 preservation ordinance gave landmarked buildings no protection other than a 90-day delay before a demolition permit was issued.

When Joseph Trujillo, the owner of Jose’s Restaurant, purchased the land-

marked Stone House at 2546 W. Alamo to demolish it and turn it into a parking lot for his employees and customers, rita sprang into action. She wrote letters; she spoke at the council hearing; she tried to rally public support.

“I wanted this to be saved,” rita said. “I was running around in my shorts saying ‘it’s not a bad house.’”

“To have a historic district, you can’t take away even one house,” rita said. “That’s like having a beautiful face with a missing tooth.”

The city council voted to allow the building to be destroyed in 1977.

Before the house was demolished, rita painted a watercolor of it. That was the beginning of what she calls her “preservation paintings.”

In the late 1970’s she exhibited a number of these

artworks in an attempt to show the Littleton community “what exquisite, good examples of varied architecture we had here in our lower downtown.”

Now she is donating over 20 of these works to Historic Littleton, Inc. to continue raising public awareness of the importance of historic preservation.

The paintings show various buildings which no longer exist and views of the Highline Canal and the Front Range Mountains that have been developed.

“We did tons of work (to preserve buildings in the 70’s) and nothing happened,” rita said. “Now we are back at it.”



This watercolor of the former building at 5515 S. Spotswood is one of the works to be shown at the May 14 exhibit.

