

## Fine Arts and Fest

### Tremont Arts Festival

**Matthew MacDonald**

On Saturday September 17th and Sunday, September 18th, Tremont will be hosting their 13th annual arts and cultural festival at Lincoln Park. The park is located at 1208 Starkweather Avenue. Saturday the Festival starts at 11am and ends at 6pm. Sunday the festivities begin at 12pm and end at 5pm.

According to the [Tremont West Development Corporation web site](#), "The mission of the Festival is to celebrate the cultural and artistic diversity of Tremont and Greater Cleveland by encouraging the artistic and cultural endeavors of its visual and performing artists".

What you can expect is food, music, dance and poetry performances, art your children can participate in as well as art that you can purchase.

On the surface, it may seem that the goal of this festival is to raise money solely through merchandising. This is not the case. After speaking with Festival Manager Scott Rosenstein I learned about the beginnings and overall intent of this festival.

In September of 1999, Rosenstein, along with several other residents, (notably Jean Brandt, founder of the [Brandt Gallery](#), Tremont's longest running art gallery) started this grass roots promotion of area artists.

When questioned about the popularity of the festival over the past 13 years, Rosenstein feels that he is subjectively pious. Folks really look forward to it and Artists reactions to it have been favorable. Many of them have participated multiple times. This is with good reason, too. It is standard procedure for the artists to submit a survey regarding their experience in the festival. Over the past two years, well more than half of the artists have had positive experiences with the park layout, the amount of sales they have made and the level of help they have received from the event staff.

Speaking as a former resident, I have often wondered what it was that attracted artists to Tremont.

Initially, I thought that it was the churches. It's the first thing that even a casual observer would notice. There are a lot of churches in this neighborhood. It doesn't even matter which direction you from. I-71, I-90, I-490... All of them have a church within view. According to "Cleveland on Foot" by Patience Hoskins, there are 25 multi-denominational churches within 1 square mile of this neighborhood.

After speaking with Mr. Rosenstein as well as doing some research of my own, I have come to the conclusion that it is the combination of the religious presence of the area as well as the history of Tremont.

Take the site of this weekends festival, Lincoln Park, for example. In 1850, Mrs. Thirsa Pelton originally bought the site with the intention of opening a girl's school. Unfortunately, she died before the school could be built. As a result, her heirs surrounded the park with a fence and locked the gates. In response to this action, Tremont residents repeatedly tore the fence down because they felt that this was an area that should be open to the public. Bitter litigation ensued further resulting in the city's purchase of the park. The residents celebrated the opening of Pelton Park on July 4, 1880 with a barbecue and additional festivities. It wasn't until 1896 that the park was renamed Lincoln Park.

The history of this community runs deeper than most people, locals included, seem to realize.



The original settlers of the neighborhood we now know as Tremont hailed from New England. These people were economically better off than most and they were in search of an area outside of downtown Cleveland to build their homes. They settled in Tremont in 1818.

In 1851, these same settlers, through a remarkably nebulous set of circumstances, decided that the area known as present-day Tremont would be the future site of Cleveland University. Initially, classes began in an off-site location due to the fact that the future of the school depended on said proposed site. It was the intent that this area was to be named University Heights. Hence, the names of the streets like Literary, Professor, College, etc.

After a full year of operation resulting in the awarding of 8 degrees, attendance declined rapidly during the fall of 1852. By 1853, the idea of Cleveland's first university was abandoned. Supposedly this was the result of a personality clash between members of the board of trustees.

8 years later, the Civil War started.

While it's fairly obvious where the war occurred very few people realize that Cleveland was the site of one of the largest Civil War camps. In July of 1862, Camp Cleveland was organized and located in the area that is presently known as W. 5th, W. 7th, Railway Avenue and Marquardt Ave. For three years, the camp housed visiting units, confederate prisoners, and served as the training ground for 15,230 officers. The camp closed shortly after the end of the war in August of 1865.

Facts like these seem to be easily kicked to the side when it comes to the rejuvenation of a local area. While it is good on many levels that this sort of rejuvenation happens, people become more concerned about the trend that a local area produces as opposed to the history of that area.

There really is no happy balance between the two.

Personally, I think it has to do with the fact that a lot of us had to suffer some very terrible history teachers throughout our formal education. We've been conditioned on some level to think that history is boring.

History isn't boring. It, like everything else in life, is what you make of it.

Tremont is a testament to this.

With its flourishing restaurant scene, the economical growth that has been stimulated by shopping area known as Steelyard Commons, and its budding art scene, Tremont is well on its way to being a hotbed of Culture in Cleveland.