

# TODAY

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2005

*Architecture* **Column**

## Optometrists eye building restoration



DOUG KAPUSTIN : SUN STAFF

The Barenburg Building at Park Avenue and Fayette Street was built in 1892 to house a bank. It survived the Great Baltimore Fire of Feb. 7-8, 1904.

*Barenburg on west side  
to get \$150,000 face-lift*

By EDWARD GUNTS  
SUN ARCHITECTURE CRITIC

**T**he Great Fire of 1904, which started 101 years ago today, destroyed more than 70 blocks of downtown Baltimore, including 20 banks, eight hotels, nine newspaper plants and four lumberyards.

Now one of the survivors will be restored for another century of use as part of the city's efforts to revitalize the west side of downtown.

The Barenburg Building at 100 Park Ave., constructed in 1892 to house a bank and now home to Barenburg Eye Associates, will get a \$150,000 face-lift this year to return its stone and brick exterior to the way it looked before the 1904 fire.

The five-story building has been owned since 1980 by optometrists Mark Gordon and Howard Levin and their wives. Gordon and Levin use it as the headquarters for their practice, Barenburg Eye Associates, a network of optometric offices that was founded in 1912 and now has eight locations around the Baltimore area.

Gordon and Levin upgraded the building's interior in the 1990s and intend to restore the exterior starting in the next few months. They plan to spend another \$150,000 to restore the adjacent four-story building at 202 W. Fayette St. and make it part of their practice.

It's a clear vote of confidence in the west side as a place to do business.

"We're packed with patients," Gordon said. "We have a very large following, and we only anticipate that will increase. Park Avenue is our No. 1 office. People will come downtown for good services." [See *Architecture*, 2c]

# Barenburg Building to get \$150,000 face-lift

[Architecture, from Page 1c]

The project is small compared to the 3.6-acre "superblock" project planned nearby, a \$100 million development expected to contain hundreds of residences and dozens of retailers in a mix of new and recycled buildings.

But it demonstrates how older buildings can continue to play a role in the west-side renewal efforts — and even set the tone for larger projects — when owners value the historic nature of the buildings they control.

With its rounded corner, rusticated granite base and conical roof tower, the Barenburg Building is one of the most distinctive structures on the west side, even though some of its features have been obscured over time. A report on file with the Maryland Historical Trust, by O'Connell and Associates, calls it "a study in late nineteenth century stylistic eclecticism."

DRC Inc. of Ellicott City is the general contractor for the restorations of 100 Park Ave. and 202 W. Fayette St. Both will comply with federal restoration standards, so the owners will be eligible for tax credits for historic preservation.

As part of the Barenburg



1920 PHOTO

The Barenburg Building is a distinctive structure.

Building restoration, awnings will be removed to reveal large arched windows overlooking Park Avenue and Fayette Street. The brickwork will be cleaned and repointed. The cornice and ledges will be repaired.

"A lot of the windows that are closed up are going to be reopened," said architect Peter Notari of Notari & Associates, the design firm working with the owners.

"When we take off what we're going to take off, it will go a long way toward bringing it back to

its original state," Notari said.

"They're not just going to take it back. ... They're going to make it look better," said Baltimore Development Corp. President M. Jay Brodie, who praised the project during an announcement last week about the status of the "superblock" project.

**Mark Gordon and Howard Levin upgraded the building's interior in the 1990s and intend to restore the exterior starting in the next few months.**

The Barenburg Building was constructed to house the Border State Savings Bank, which was incorporated in 1874.

The building was partially reconstructed in 1914 to move the main banking rooms to the ground floor, add an apartment for the directors and shift the entrance from the corner to the Park Avenue side. A 1920 photo shows a sign pointing to a barbershop in the basement.

The Great Fire of 1904 began at 10:48 a.m. Sunday, Feb. 7, and burned for 30 hours, until 5 p.m. Monday, Feb. 8. It killed five people and destroyed about 1,500 buildings and 2,500 businesses, leaving 35,000 workers jobless.

One of the characteristics that makes the west side of downtown different from and in some ways more interesting than Baltimore's central business district is that it contains buildings that pre-date the fire and represent a variety of architectural styles.

By contrast, Baltimore's financial district was largely destroyed and rebuilt, so it contains many buildings dating from 1905 but few that were constructed before. There tends to be a certain sameness to streets where all the buildings were constructed within the same decade.

The Barenburg Building is noteworthy, Gordon said, because it marks the spot on the west side of downtown where the Great Fire stopped. To the west of it, buildings survived. But "all the buildings across the street are much newer."

Barenburg Eye Associates was founded by J.W. Barenburg, a physician who started an optometric practice on Eastern Avenue and expanded to Park Avenue in 1937.

Barenburg ran his Park Avenue office from 1937 to 1955 and lived upstairs in the building during that time.

Gordon said he and Levin kept the name when they bought the practice because Barenburg was so well known and respected — the place where many Baltimoreans got their first eye exams. "It's been an institution for so long," Gordon said. "He was ahead of his time."

**"TREMENDOUSLY FUNNY"**  
Shawn Edwards, FOX-TV

DEBRA MESSING  
DERMOT MULRONEY

The WEDDING DATE

PG-13

© 2004 UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

NOW PLAYING

AMC COLUMBIA 14 1410 Columbia 410-423-0520	LOEWS VALLEY CENTRE 9 9616 Reisterstown Rd. (800) FANDANGO #744	MUVICO EGYPTIAN 24 49 Annapolis Mills (443) 755-9992	REGAL BEL AIR 14 439 Conant Friendship Blvd. 800-FANDANGO #247	UNITED ARTISTS MARLEY STATION 7903 Governor Ritchie Hwy. 800-FANDANGO #571
AMC TOWSON COMMONS 8 York Rd. & Pennsylvania Ave. 410-928-3255	LOEWS CINEPLEX WHITE MARSH White Marsh Blvd. & I-95 N. 800-FANDANGO #738	NORTHEAST CINEMAS WEST NURSERY 14 Unithicum, MD (410) 850-9999	REGAL HUNT VALLEY STADIUM 12 11511 McCormick Rd. 800-326-3264 #450	UNITED ARTISTS SNOWDEN SQUARE STADIUM 14 9161 Connetquot Center Dr. 800-FANDANGO #570

SPECIAL ENGAGEMENTS NO PASSES OR DISCOUNT COUPONS ACCEPTED CHECK THEATRE DIRECTORIES OR CALL FOR SOUND INFORMATION AND SHOWTIMES

7 ACADEMY AWARD NOMINATIONS INCLUDING  
**7 BEST PICTURE**  
MILLION DOLLAR BABY

PG-13

AMC COLUMBIA 14 1410 Columbia 410-423-0520	LOEWS CINEPLEX VALLEY CENTRE 9 9616 Reisterstown Rd. 800-FANDANGO #744	NORTHEAST CINEMAS WEST NURSERY 14 Unithicum, MD 410-850-9999	REGAL CINEMAS HUNT VALLEY STADIUM 12 11511 McCormick Rd. 800-FANDANGO #450	UNITED ARTISTS SNOWDEN SQUARE STADIUM 14 9161 Connetquot Center Dr. 800-FANDANGO #570
AMC TOWSON COMMONS 8 York Rd. & Pennsylvania Ave. 410-928-3255	LOEWS CINEPLEX WHITE MARSH White Marsh Blvd. & I-95 N. 800-FANDANGO #738	INDEPENDENT THE SENATOR 6994 York Rd. 410-435-8338	MUVICO EGYPTIAN 24 49 Annapolis Mills 443-755-9992	UNITED ARTISTS MARLEY STATION 7903 Governor Ritchie Hwy. 800-FANDANGO #571

SPECIAL ENGAGEMENTS NO PASSES OR DISCOUNT COUPONS ACCEPTED CHECK THEATRE DIRECTORIES OR CALL FOR SOUND INFORMATION AND SHOWTIMES

For More Information About This Movie  
America Online Keyword: Million Dollar Baby www.milliondollarbabymovie.net Moviefone.com