

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **PITT PRESERVATION CLASS NOMINATES FORMER URSULINE ACADEMY FOR NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

Ten students in the Documentation and Conservation Studio class of the University of Pittsburgh's Department of History of Art and Architecture have spent most of their Tuesday and Thursday evenings since late August examining the former Ursuline Academy of Pittsburgh, tracking down historical records and conducting extensive research in an effort to nominate the property to the National Register of Historic Places.

The public is invited to attend a presentation of the students' findings at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 14, in the auditorium of the former Ursuline Academy, now the Waldorf School of Pittsburgh, at 201 S. Winebiddle Avenue, in the Bloomfield/Friendship neighborhood of Pittsburgh.

Working under Pitt instructor Jeff Slack of Pfaffmann + Associates, a Pittsburgh architectural firm, the class spent the semester undertaking the research necessary to write the detailed nomination, which will be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office in January. The hands-on course had a two-fold purpose – to teach students about historic preservation in the field and to get the historic campus placed on the National Register. Throughout the course, students consulted regularly with Bill Callahan, Community Preservation Coordinator for the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

"This important work builds upon a detailed evaluation of the physical condition of the main building in 2008 by Pitt preservation students, but focuses in much greater detail on original research into the far-reaching educational contributions of the Ursuline Academy to the local community," says Slack.

The center of the campus is the grand Second Empire home built for dry goods merchant Henry Lynch in approximately 1867. The property changed hands several times before the Ursulines purchased it in 1894 for use as a school and convent. In the early twentieth century, the Ursulines commissioned several additions to accommodate the academy's growth – including an auditorium with nuns' quarters above, a classroom addition, and a chapel designed by Pittsburgh architect Carlton Strong.

The Ursulines' prime focus was education. Their elite academy, which operated as a boarding school until 1948, offered a broad curriculum including English, Philosophy, Religion, Science, and Math. The teachers encouraged girls to speak their minds, taught progressive ideas through music and public speaking, and offered college preparatory courses.

The Ursuline Academy was in operation for 87 years before closing its doors in 1981. In 1993, the Ursulines sold the property to Joedda Sampson, who turned it into a banquet facility known as Victoria Hall. The Waldorf School of Pittsburgh bought the property in 2003, and enrolls children from preschool through fifth grade.

As part of their investigation, the Pitt students delved into historic maps, photographs, deeds, and building permits and will spend part of the presentation helping property owners learn how they can begin researching their own house history.

###

### CONTACTS:

Drew Armstrong, Director of Architectural Studies, Department of History of Art and Architecture, University of Pittsburgh, 412-648-2402, [cda68@pitt.edu](mailto:cda68@pitt.edu)

Jeff Slack, Instructor, Department of History of Art and Architecture, University of Pittsburgh, 412-471-2472, [jeff@pfaffmann.com](mailto:jeff@pfaffmann.com)

Brendan Froeschl, Facilities Manager, Waldorf School of Pittsburgh, 412-441-5792, ext. 228, [bfroeschl@waldorfpittsburgh.org](mailto:bfroeschl@waldorfpittsburgh.org)

***In addition to running this as an event listing, we would appreciate coverage of the event or a feature story about our interesting findings.***