

Miracles DO Happen.. the full story....

For Tile Heritage it started with an email from **Linda Carrigan** at the [American Art Pottery Association](#) forwarding an email she had received from **Maureen Strazdon**, a local preservationist in Cranford, a town of 22,000 located on the Garden State Parkway south of Newark. A simple identification was all that was asked for, but there was an expressed urgency as the 1927 school where the tiles were installed was in the process of being demolished! Do these old tiles have any value?



Flint Faience fireplace mantel,
Roosevelt Elementary School, Cranford, New Jersey.
Photo courtesy Maureen Strazdon

Of course, the tiles, identified as **Flint Faience**, had historic value, and **Suzanne Perrault** of the [Perrault Rago Gallery](#) in Lambertville affirmed that they had monetary value as well. We were also able to put Maureen in contact with **Larry Mobley**, [Mobley & Company](#) in Michigan, a “one-man-show” of expertise in the removal of precious historic tiles, who might be available were his schedule free and the appropriate funds available.

The local press got involved almost immediately—always on the lookout for an unusual story. Similar installations had been recently saved in Royal Oak, Michigan and in Erie, Pennsylvania, so there was some meat on the bone for reporters.

Then **Barbara Fuller** of the **Union County Office of Cultural and Heritage Affairs** had joined in the fray. The demolition of the school was halted. We were contacted by the Newark Star-Ledger’s Local News Service to fill in the historic gaps for the developing story. We were able to recommend that the reporter contact two people directly involved in saving tile mantels in their own communities: **Diana Barrer** in Royal Oak and **Mary Jane Koenig** in Erie. Then it turned out that **Larry Mobley** was available for the job, and he submitted his bid without delay. An article finally appeared on Sunday, August 22nd. See http://www.nj.com/news/local/index.ssf/2010/08/preservationists_hope_to_save.html

Barbara spearheaded the effort to obtain a Certificate of Eligibility from the **New Jersey Historic Preservation Office**, as the school had to first be included in the state’s Register of Historic Places. She found success having written an in depth, convincing argument for the mantel’s preservation. At the last minute people from the **Union County Open Space, Recreation and Historic Preservation Trust Fund** presented a resolution to the **Board of Chosen Freeholders**, who agreed to approve the funding to have the tiles removed, packed and stored until a new suitable location was found in the community where the mantel could be reinstalled.

So..... Miracles DO happen! By the end of the month the tiles had been safely removed, and a follow up story appeared in the local paper... check it out:

http://www.nj.com/cranford/index.ssf/2010/08/fireplace_tiles_will_survive_d.html