Most of us get involved in historic preservation because we care about the places that have shaped us. We love the quality of life in established neighborhoods, or the history and beauty of old buildings, or the diversity of styles and character that comes when places are built slowly over long periods of time.

But historic preservation as a discipline and public policy area also has real economic consequences for cities and communities, and it’s not always obvious what that precise impact is. So last year, Preservation Buffalo Niagara and the Lipsey Architecture Center Buffalo hired the world-renowned economists at PlaceEconomics to do a deep dive into the legacy and impact of historic preservation in Buffalo. While we expected the results to be generally favorable, even we were startled to see the outsized and extremely positive outcomes of investing in preservation. (And this report covers only the City of Buffalo – it would make sense that the results would be even more positive if we were to look across the entire region.)

While many people associate preservation with monumental projects (and we will get to that impact shortly), Buffalo’s historic neighborhoods offer some of the most profound and interesting results, from both an economic standpoint and when considering quality of life.

First, perhaps the most unexpected result: while Buffalo has long been recognized as one of the most segregated cities in the United States, an issue that is currently at the forefront of many people’s minds, our local historic districts are among the most integrated places in the city and thus seem to show a model of integrated community in Buffalo. While overall 30 percent of Buffalo’s white residents and 34 percent of its Black residents live in extremely segregated neighborhoods,¹ in local historic districts these numbers drop to only 17 percent.

¹ “Extremely segregated neighborhoods” are defined as neighborhoods where at least 80 percent of the population is of the same race.
Happy pumpkin spice season, preservationists!

Is there anything more beautiful than our historic neighborhoods framed by fall leaves? No, we don’t think so either! And what more beautiful way to make sure you see everything this fall than by exploring with PBN’s self-guided tours. Whether from our Preservation Passport series or our Drive Yourself MODern selections, PBN encourages you to get out, visit some local farm stands, and learn more about our built environment in this beautiful season!

If you’re looking for some cozy reading by the fire for those chilly evenings, we highly recommend downloading our new study on the impacts of historic preservation in Buffalo, summarized for you in this newsletter’s cover article. We couldn’t do it all justice here, so it’s definitely worth your time to take a look.

We will be using this report’s findings to help us refine our priorities for 2023 and beyond as we continue to shape our strategic plan, which we will be presenting to members later this year. A sneak peek will be available at our Annual Meeting, and we hope you will join us – it will be our first in-person Annual Meeting since 2019! We are so looking forward to re-connecting this way!

It’s also that time of year when we remind you that we could not do any of the work we do without the generous and ongoing support of our members. We know that inflation has taken a hit on everyone’s bottom line, but when you are sitting down to consider where to make your year-end contributions, we hope you’ll think favorably of all the work PBN does to advocate for the places you love. We continue to be so grateful for your support.

From the entire staff and board at PBN, we wish you a happy and healthy rest of 2022, and are looking forward to seeing you in person soon!

Yours,

Jessie Fisher
Executive Director
Get to Know an Architectural Style: 
SECOND EMPIRE

By Christiana Limniatis,
PBN Director of Preservation Services

Search the interwebs for images of a "haunted house," and almost every picture you’ll see will be a mansard-topped, cast-iron-crested-wearing, Second Empire style house. Mosey down the Halloween aisle at any big box emporium and you can get any number of decorations adorned with a spooky mansard roof. And if you think of any scary story you read as a kid, chances are that smack on the cover was a cobweb-covered Second Empire style house circled by bats.

Second Empire is the king of scary. But there’s much more to the style than just that.

The majority of traditional American architectural styles are revivals or reinterpretations of previous design theories from around the world. But the Second Empire, popular nationally from 1855 till about 1890, is one of the few examples of an architectural style that was very modern and organic. Instead of mimicking building designs from 200 years earlier, it imitated the newest, most fashionable French buildings. In the 1850s, France saw the rise of Napoleon III, who initially served as the first president of France until he declared himself Emperor, thus creating the Second French Empire. During his twenty-year reign, Napoleon III commissioned a massive public works project to transform Paris from an overgrown medieval city of patchwork neighborhoods to the first modern city, influencing planning projects in cities around the world for decades.

During Napoleon III’s construction blitz, a major trend was the revival of the mansard roof shape. Named after 17th-century architect François Mansart, this roof shape would become the character-defining feature of the Second Empire Style. At its simplest, a mansard roof is a roof that has two slopes on every side, with the lower slope considerably steeper than the upper. Very often there will be dormer windows on the steep lower slope and molded cornice lines above and below it. Brackets usually accent a moderate-to-low overhanging eave. Roofs are often further accented by cupolas, towers, and cast iron cresting along roof lines.

So how did everyone get on the same mansard-roof-obsessed page? Thanks to Napoleon III’s reinvention of Paris, the city’s new look (and new mansard roofs) were on display during the Exposition Universelle of 1855, an international exhibition which was held on the newly spruced up Avenue des Champs-Élysées. Soon after, mansard roofs started popping up all over...
NATIONAL REGISTER LISTINGS
From July through September, six Western New York sites were added to the National Register of Historic Places. Located on Delaware Avenue in Kenmore, St. Paul’s Roman Catholic Church Complex was determined significant for both its history and its architecture. The complex includes the 1954 church building, 1953 rectory, and 1925 school with additions from 1929 and 1962. These buildings represent a variety of styles including Gothic Revival, Tudor Revival, Collegiate Gothic, and Mid-Century Modern.

The Monroe Motor Car Company Building and Main Garage Company Building, located on Main Street in Buffalo, were constructed in 1920 and 1930 respectively. Listed together as a single site, both are significant for their contribution to the commercial, social, and architectural history of the automobile industry in Buffalo. The Monroe building was renovated in the 1970s to house Record Theatre, but the steel cladding that was added at that time has been removed to reveal the original brick.

Buffalo Public Schools #32 and #92, on Clinton and Fougeron Streets respectively, were both listed for their association with BUILD Academy. Founded in 1966, BUILD (Build Unity, Independence, Liberty, and Dignity) was an influential organization that fought racial discrimination in employment, labor, job training, education, and criminal justice in Buffalo. In order to assist disenfranchised public-school students on the city’s East Side, they established their own school, BUILD Academy, in 1969, with a curriculum and learning methods specifically focused on the needs of Black students. From 1969 to 1977 the school occupied the former PS 32 building, and from 1977 until BUILD’s dissolution in 1983, they used the former PS 92 building.

Also in Buffalo, the Illinois Alcohol Company Building on Niagara Street is a warehouse constructed in 1920 that is significant for its association with the city’s distilling and brewing industry. While originally built for the Bison City Storage Company, it was purchased by the Illinois Alcohol Company in 1925, and its subsequent owner, the Niagara Filter Corporation, used it until 1950. Now, in a major adaptive reuse project by the Westminster Economic Development Initiative (WEDI), it’s on its way to becoming the new home of the West Side Bazaar.
Finally, the Buffalo Veterans Hospital Historic District (Buffalo VHHD) on Bailey Avenue contains six contributing buildings constructed from 1947 to 1949. Designed by Green & James, successor firm of Green & Wicks, the campus is an example of the third generation of VA hospitals which were built following World War II. These hospitals were typically located in major urban centers and included skyscraper-type buildings and dedicated research facilities. Research done at the Buffalo Veterans Hospital in the 1950s contributed to the development of the implantable pacemaker.

LANDMARK UPDATES

Buffalo

In July, two local landmark applications came before the City of Buffalo Preservation Board. The Niagara Frontier Growers Co-operative Market/Clinton Bailey Farmers Market at 1443 Clinton Street was built from 1930-31 as a successor for the congested Elk Street Market and has been a food hub on the East Side ever since. At the Preservation Board’s public hearing for this application on September 8th, the Board unanimously recommended that the Common Council approve the application.

Saint Adalbert Roman Catholic Basilica on Stanislaus Street was completed in 1891 by architect Raymond Huber and is an excellent example of Romanesque style architecture. It is the only basilica church located in the city of Buffalo, a status given in 1907, which makes it the first basilica designated in the United States. The Preservation Board will vote on this application at their next meeting on September 20th. Saint Adalbert’s is a current participant in our Sacred Spaces Assistance Program (SSAP), which you can read an update about on page 6!

Niagara Falls

At their August 4th meeting, the Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission moved to pursue locally landmarking the former Native American Center for the Living Arts, commonly known as the Turtle. Located on Rainbow Boulevard, the building was designed by notable Arapaho architect Dennis Sun Rhodes and completed in 1981 to house Native American artifacts and celebrate Native American culture. The building’s unique shape references the Haudenosaunee story that animals created North America on the back of a large turtle. After being closed in 1995 due to a lack of funding, the building has been unused ever since, and local landmarking would provide it with well-deserved protection. PBN is in full support of this effort and is working with the Commission to draft the landmark nomination, which will be revisited at their October meeting.

SECOND ANNUAL PRESERVATION DAY

On August 7, the second annual Preservation Day was held at Buffalo Niagara Heritage Village (BNHV). Made possible through a grant from the New York State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Department, the event was co-sponsored by BNHV, the Amherst Historic Preservation Commission, and PBN. This year’s Preservation Day included demonstrations, tours, activities, talks, ice cream, and alpacas, and featured representatives from historic preservation

continued on page 6
commissions including Williamsville and Clarence. Over 350 people came throughout the day to join in this celebration of preservation!

The second annual Preservation Day was held at the Buffalo Niagara Heritage Village and welcomed over 350 visitors.

SACRED SPACES ASSISTANCE PROGRAM UPDATE

PBN’s Sacred Spaces Assistance Program provides technical assistance to religious organizations housed in historic buildings, assisting them with pursuing National Register (NR) listing as part of their work to preserve and rehabilitate their historic structures. With 10 active participants in the program, PBN has secured NR eligibility for two churches in Buffalo, Gospel Temple Church of God in Christ (previously Central Park Baptist Church) on Beard Avenue and the former St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church on Hertel Avenue. We are now working on drafting the NR nomination for St. John’s and securing NR eligibility for St. Adalbert Roman Catholic Basilica and St. Casimir Roman Catholic Church, with multiple others in the pipeline. Sacred Spaces Assistance Program is made possible by the generous support of the Charles D. and Mary A. Bauer Foundation.
EVERY GIFT COUNTS

Preservation Buffalo Niagara is the region’s only full-service, professionally staffed preservation organization.

Give today to empower Western New Yorkers to champion historic preservation as a way to create a more culturally rich, vibrant, affordable, and sustainable community.

Donate today by mail or by visiting https://preservationbuffaloniagara.org/annual-appeal
England, and the Second Empire style made its way to America.

Overall, Second Empire style residences usually have two or three stories, with tall, narrow, arched- or square-topped windows, sometimes accented with window hoods or surrounds. Small entry porches are most common, but large wraparound porches are also featured. While later Queen Anne-style homes have highly decorative porches covered in gingerbread details, Second Empire porches are usually sparsely decorated and have square posts with beveled or chamfered edges.

For about twenty years, the Second Empire style was so popular that almost every American building plan pattern book includes at least one example. It was also the go-to style for the dozens of federal and other municipal buildings constructed during the administration of President Ulysses S. Grant, many of which replaced infrastructure lost during the Civil War. The style was used so often that it was jokingly referred to as “General Grant” style. But like most good things, it didn’t last, falling sharply out of fashion in the 1870s, in part due to the panic of 1873 and the subsequent extended economic depression. However, the mansard roof did have a bit of a reprieve in the modern era, popular again from about the 1950s through 1985; mansard-roofed buildings from this period are usually referred to as either Neo-Mansard or just Mansard style.

But, to go back to the start of our exploration of this style, why is Second Empire so associated with all things scary? By the 1920s and 1930s, the style was very much out of fashion. At this time, the very beginning of the modern era, Second Empire buildings were often prime candidates for demolition and replacement. The association of the style with decrepitude was firmly secured in 1938 when The New Yorker magazine premiered a new cartoon series featuring the titular Addams Family, macabre characters who lived in a spooky, cobweb-covered, mansard-roofed, Second Empire-style mansion. The Addams Family house was the first in a long line of scary and spooky Second Empire homes, including the home of the Munsters, the Psycho house, the house of murderous neighbors in the movie The 'Burbs, and the location of many a crime in Scooby Doo. The Owens women of the book and movie Practical Magic live in a Second Empire, as do Leti Lewis of Lovecraft Country, the Locke family in Locke and Key, Dani & Max in Hocus Pocus, and Count Olaf from A Series of Unfortunate Events.

But there’s also non-scary Second Empire pop culture out there: Edward Hopper painted Second Empire style homes in Mansard Roof and House by the Railroad, and Vampire Weekend has a peppy song called “Mansard Roof.” I’m sure there’s more, right?

Locally, notable residential examples of the Second Empire style include: the Rothfuss House, 3455 Route 39, Collins; 182 Morgan Street, Tonawanda; the Coatsworth House, 49 Cottage Street, Buffalo; and the four small houses on St. Louis Place, Buffalo.

Do you have a great example of Second Empire in your community? Share it to social media with the hashtag #PBNsecondempire.
Historic Tax Credit Webinars

Our Monthly Historic Tax Credit Webinar offers you time to ask questions about finalizing your homeowner historic tax credit application.

Upcoming 2022 Webinars

Wednesday, October 12 at 6pm
Wednesday, November 9 at 6pm

Registration required.

Check out our YouTube channel to view our mini tax credit workshop!
for white residents and 22 percent for Black residents. Likewise, while in the city as a whole only 18 percent of white Buffalonians and 11 percent of Black Buffalonians live in integrated neighborhoods,2 23 percent of white Buffalonians and 21 percent of Black Buffalonians who live in local historic districts live in integrated neighborhoods.

Preservationists sometimes get hit with the charge of being anti-density or anti-growth. But in Buffalo, the data shows that local historic districts (the kind of historic district that comes with the most regulation and development controls) are actually much denser than the city as a whole and have seen much more net growth. Buffalo has an average of 11,000 people per square mile, but in the city’s local historic districts, the average is closer to 13,000. While overall growth in housing units is about 2 percent for the city as a whole over the last ten years, local historic districts have seen a whopping 9 percent housing unit growth. Fully 30 percent of the city’s housing unit growth occurred in local historic districts, even though these districts only account for 4 percent of residential parcels. And while overall, the city’s population grew by about 7 percent, the rate was much higher in local historic districts: 11 percent. Let those statistics forever kill the tired, old (untrue) trope that historic districts can’t accommodate growth. Clearly, in Buffalo, that’s where nearly all the growth is actually happening!

Local historic districts also see the highest property values in the city, punching well above their weight class and providing the best opportunities locally for creating generational wealth through property ownership. While the average residential property not located in a historic district has a value of $55.08/square foot, those located within local historic districts have an average value of $71.03/square foot. For those in National Register districts, the average rises to $100.63. And while the City’s recent revaluation generally showed an increase in property values across the board from 2017 to 2022, homes outside local historic districts increased by 65 percent, whereas homes within such districts increased in value by over 100 percent.

While all of this growth seems positive, one concern we frequently hear is that living in a local historic district will be too expensive. While Buffalonians in general do tend to be cost-burdened3 by housing, this is less a function of the cost of maintaining homes than it is a function of very low incomes in the city, as income levels in Buffalo lag well behind statewide and national averages. That said, there is no data showing that folks living in local historic districts in Buffalo are more cost-burdened than their counterparts outside of historic districts, with 18 percent of those who own homes in non-designated areas being cost-burdened or severely

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2 “Integrated neighborhoods” are defined as neighborhoods where less than 60 percent of the population belongs to any one race.

3 A cost-burdened household is one that pays more than 30 percent of its income toward housing expenses; a severely cost-burdened household pays more than 50 percent.
cost-burdened, and about 19 percent of those who own homes in local districts being cost-burdened or severely cost-burdened. In fact, about 65 percent of owned units in local historic districts have monthly owner costs that are lower than those in non-designated areas of the city. Renters are generally less cost-burdened in local historic districts than in non-designated areas.

While we’ve focused here mostly on the impacts of preservation on neighborhoods, those large projects we glossed over earlier do have quite an impact on our local economy. Visitors to Buffalo who are classified as primary heritage visitors (meaning the main purpose of their trip is to visit historic sites and museums) contribute 35 percent of the $1,900,000 tourism economy in Buffalo. This is despite those visitors making up only 14 percent of the total visitors to the region. Heritage visitors tend to stay longer and spend more money than other types of visitors. When you factor in secondary heritage visitors (those who come primarily for another purpose, but visit heritage sites while they are here), which make up another 25 percent of visitors to Buffalo, that number grows even more. Overall, primary heritage visitors contribute an astounding $658,978,462 to our local economy every year! Investments in heritage visitors pay off more than those in any other type of visitor to the region.

The PlaceEconomics report also goes on to detail job impacts related to historic preservation, commercial district growth and overall health, and the historic tax credit program. All of these areas were similarly positive regarding the impact of preservation on Buffalo and Western New York, but are too detailed for this quick summary. To take a deeper dive into all of the data, we encourage you to download the full report here: www.preservationbuffaloniagara.com/everyones-heritage.

We’d like to take this time to sincerely thank our funders for the opportunity to put a quantitative face on what we all knew in our hearts was true – that preservation is a key driver of a stronger, more prosperous, more equitable future for Buffalo. This work was made possible with funding from the Baird Foundation, the John R. Oishei Foundation, New York State Senator Sean Ryan, and Erik Stenclick and Steven Deitz. 🙏
In August, PBN was pleased to welcome Gregory Rabb to our team. Greg recently retired from SUNY Jamestown Community College where he was Professor of Political Science and Coordinator of Global Education. He previously served as Chair of the Jamestown City Planning Commission, Vice Chair of the Jamestown Urban Renewal Agency, and President of the Jamestown City Council. He is a graduate of Canisius High School, Canisius College, and SUNY Buffalo School of Law. Greg also holds a Master’s degree in urban planning from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Greg lives with his cat Oliver and is happy to return to Buffalo, the city of his birth and the home of most of his family, including six beautiful grand nephews.

Why does preservation matter?
Preservation is more than just saving buildings. Preservation is an essential part of creating a just city, as noted by Henry Taylor of SUNY Buffalo when he said we should be aiming for a city anchored around social, racial, and economic justice. I teach a graduate course in city management at SUNY Buffalo State College, and one of the books I like to use is by James M. Bourey (A Guidebook for City Managers), in which he states that achieving social justice after centuries of repression and prejudice so that all can obtain the benefits of our modern society will be our greatest challenge. Preservation of communities and neighborhoods is an important part of the solution.

What brought you to PBN?
I have been and continue to be an academic at heart, but the President of the SUNY Rockefeller Institute for Governance referred to me as a “pracademic” because of my long time work in government and the non-profit sector, dating back to my work with my preservation professor at the University of Illinois, the late Lachlan Blair. After 36 years, I recently retired as a professor at Jamestown Community College to return to Buffalo. I was excited to find an opportunity to achieve social justice in our communities through the excellent work at PBN and its meaningful commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

What is your favorite local landmark?
My heart is in Buffalo Central Terminal. I grew up in the shadow of that building at my grandparents’ house in the Broadway-Fillmore Historic District. My dad worked for the railroad and as a young boy through graduate school I boarded many a train at the Terminal. I have more paintings and prints of this beloved building in my home than anyone I know. My dad and my recently departed older brother loved this building, too, and I hope someday to see it come back to life as a symbol of everything that Buffalo was and still can be.

What structure is overlooked or underrated?
The old Courier Express building currently occupied by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Buffalo is my choice here. I delivered the Sunday paper as a boy and I always admired the Courier
Express building, both its exterior and its lobby, as well as the mural that is in the basement. Newspapers historically built some beautiful buildings, and this is one of them. The exterior is a feast for the eyes and I hope it always stands for generations of younger people to enjoy and admire.

Any hidden talents?
Not very much about me is hidden, but, because of my Polish-American heritage, I love to polka and love to sing koledy (Polish Christmas carols). I also enjoy the sound of the Polish language, even though much of what I knew as a boy is fading away in me and others. But what better place to enjoy Polish-American heritage than in Buffalo, and what a wonderful culture to preserve for the future. Preservation is more than just saving buildings.
The original *Candyman* (released in 1992) had a huge impact on me and my friends. Based on the short story “The Forbidden” by prolific horror writer Clive Barker, *Candyman* (1992) tells the story of Helen Lyle, a white University of Illinois Chicago graduate student researching the urban legends told by residents of the Cabrini-Green Homes public housing complex. She discovers that the legend of Candyman evolved out of the murder of a well-known artist in late-19th-century Chicago who was the son of formerly enslaved parents. Accused of sleeping with a white woman, a lynch mob captures him, cuts off his hand, and covers him in honey to attract bees which sting him to death. As if that wasn’t torturous enough, the angry white mob burns his body and scatters his ashes on the land that will eventually become Cabrini-Green. And there begins the lore that the Candyman will awake and murder anyone who says his name five times in front of a mirror, a story that Helen Lyle tries to investigate, but ultimately pays the price of researching with her life.

While we were way too young to see it in the theatre, once it was released on tape and started playing on HBO, no sleepover was complete without at least a partial viewing of the movie. School wasn’t a safe zone either; I remember regular attempts to summon Candyman in the girl’s bathroom along with similar attempts bring out Bloody Mary, Madman Marz, and Beetlejuice. Movies of the 1980s and 1990s sure did love repetitive incantations! For children, the murderous one-armed man out for revenge was obviously the scariest part of the film. But as an adult striving to live and create an anti-racist life, I now see that the true monster of the film was the brutality of white supremacy and the insidious policies instituted to uphold that myth.

A real place located in the Near North Side of Chicago, the Cabrini-Green complex began in 1942 as the Frances Cabrini Homes, which included 54 low-rise brick buildings intended to improve housing conditions for low-income Chicagoans and those relocating to the city to work in wartime factories. That development was expanded in 1957 to include brick mid- and high-rises, and then again in 1962 when the Chicago Housing Authority added the William Green Homes, which included eight more high-rise towers. At the height of occupancy, the massive Cabrini-Green complex housed nearly 15,000 people and included 23 high-rise towers.

Due to the racist Federal requirements of the day, the original Cabrini Homes was intended primarily for white residents. But by the 1960s, Black and brown people made up the majority of residents. That shift in the racial makeup of the complex was not a coincidence. As Chicago continued with aggressive slum clearance and ambitious urban renewal projects, the areas targeted were neighborhoods with majority Black, Mexican, and Puerto Rican communities. For example, while accounting for only 23% of the total city population, Black residents accounted for 64% of the those who were displaced by...
urban renewal projects. The city then promptly built huge highways to further separate minority neighborhoods from white neighborhoods and undertook large gentrifying redevelopment projects, which were only financially accessible to white residents. Therefore, the Cabrini-Green complex became one of the few places in the city limits that was financially and physically accessible for minority communities.

After successfully stealing hundreds of acres out from underneath Black and brown communities, the City failed to maintain the facilities of the Cabrini-Green complex, or to provide meaningful access to community services. Building conditions continued to get worse, and police met rising crime rates with increased brutality and impunity. The posterchild for the failure of American public housing as a whole, the demolition of the Cabrini-Green’s 23 high-rise towers began in 1995 and was completed in 2010. While the demolition came with promises to replace the lost affordable housing units, the plan is now decades behind schedule. But don’t worry, the city did manage to redevelop parts of the Cabrini-Green complex with luxury condos, beautified parks, and high-end retail stores and restaurants. As one character in the 2021 Candyman explains, “white people built the ghetto and then erased it when they realized they built the ghetto.”

And that is where we find ourselves at the start of the new Candyman. Directed by Nia DaCosta (Little Woods) and written by a team including DaCosta and Jordan Peele (Key & Peele, Nope, Get Out), Candyman (2021) is a direct sequel to the 1992 film. The film begins on the site of the former Cabrini-Green complex in 2019. Artist Anthony McCoy (Yahya Abdul-Mateen II) and his art gallery-owning girlfriend Brianna Cartwright (Teyonah Parris), both native Black Chicagoans, live in one of those fancy new condos on the haunted grounds of the former Cabrini-Green complex.

Amid an artistic slump, Anthony becomes obsessed with all things Candyman. While exploring the sole surviving (and vacant) low-rise building of the complex, he meets William Burke (Colman Domingo), who owns the neighborhood laundromat. William reveals that Candyman was real, but he wasn’t the 19th-century artist of the original film: instead, Candyman was a man named Sherman Fields, who in 1977 was murdered by the cops after being wrongly accused of giving out candy with razor blades.

Processing this information, Anthony continues exploring the low rises, eventually getting stung by a bee on his hand. As I’m sure you can understand, no good things come from being stung by one of Candyman’s bees.

“I now see that the true monster of the film was the brutality of white supremacy and the insidious policies instituted to uphold that myth.”

From this point on, Anthony becomes crazed in his pursuit of the truth about Candyman. He goes to the University of Illinois and checks out Helen Lyle’s research materials, listening to the cassette recordings she made about her findings. There are moments where he’s acting almost possessed, feverishly painting haunting portraits of faces he’s seeing in his dreams. And that bee sting is not looking too good—like he chose poorly with a medieval knight in a cave kind of bad. His girlfriend, increasingly worried about his behavior, discovers his terrifying paintings and searches out his new friend at the laundromat for help. Horror ensues—both Candyman horror and police brutality horror.

While the original film simply tells a scary story hinting (well, hinting with a megaphone) at a larger racial context, the 2021 Candyman does not mince words. The Candyman legend was born out of a need to warn Black children that if you step out of line, white men in power will strike you down. But Candyman has since become key to breaking the cycles of gentrification. “They tore down our homes so they could move back in,” one character says. “We need Candyman.”