

# stlouis

MAGAZINE

WHEN IT COMES TO DOWNSIZING AND MAKING A MOVE YOU CAN LIVE WITH COMFORTABLY, KNOWING WHAT'S AVAILABLE CAN HELP YOU FIND THE MOST SUITABLE LIVING SITUATION.

## A Place to Call Home

*St. Louis Altenheim, an assisted living and continuing care residence, was featured in the July 2004 St. Louis Maturity Section of St. Louis Magazine.*

### ASSISTED LIVING

Assisted living is appropriate for individuals who require additional support in their daily lives. With this living situation, the individual typically has private living quarters, but he or she also has extra help with daily activities including dressing, personal hygiene, medication monitoring and assistance at mealtime.

Historic Saint Louis Altenheim offers four levels of care including Independent Assisted Living, Assisted Living, Assisted Living Plus and Continuing Care. It also offers Senior Guests Services for seniors who only want a temporary stay—from one through several weeks—for example,

while the guest's family or caregiver is away. While some assisted living facilities offer a la carte services, Saint Louis Altenheim offers its services and features at an all-inclusive price.

### FEELING A PART OF THINGS

Saint Louis Altenheim is one place where residents are never at a loss for recreation or a sense of belonging—card parties, bridge clubs and religious services with transportation provided to and from the services are standard.

Says Kathy Clark, visitors are also a big part of the equation, whether that's a visit from the Junior League for musical programs or visits from loved ones at mealtime. "Residents feel like this is their own home. It's where they live, and they can treat their guests that way here," Clark says. Spacious resident rooms and elegantly decorated visiting rooms add to the welcoming feel, as do lively events. Recently, for example, the Altenheim hosted a fullfledged Cinco de Mayo celebration complete with all the fanfare.

The Altenheim keeps residents active and involved in the community.

"Residents are also given opportunities to feel a part of the community. "What's often hard for people is that they've lived their lives feeling that they can help people, and now they feel more limited," says Clark. Saint Louis Altenheim's social curriculum is designed in part to help change those feelings. For example, residents help make sandwiches for the homeless. Spiritual needs are also a part of the program at Saint Louis Altenheim, where residents can also attend religious services in the chapel. Further inspiration, meanwhile, can be gleaned from the residence's breathtaking Mississippi riverfront views to the east.

*continued*

*Altenheim*  
Gracious Living for Assisted and Long-Term Care

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## Saint Louis Altenheim: Rooted in Riverfront History

St. Louisans are people who are keenly tuned into their city's history, and for residents at Saint Louis Altenheim, there is a wealth of the city's rich history to appreciate.

The assisted and continuing care residence had its beginnings way back in 1899. Several residents of St. Louis' German community decided there was a need to establish a place that the aged could call home. The Altenheim name, it should be noted, is a merger of the German words for "alten" or aged person, and "heim," meaning home. "There was a need for housing for what were known as 'decent elder citizens,' says Saint Louis Altenheim administrator Kathy Clark. This, of course, predated Social Security and Medicare."

Some of the most notable individuals who were key to Altenheim's formation included Gustave Cramer, a celebrated pioneer of early photography, and his wife Emma. Margaretha Meyer, who became known to her peers as the Mother of the Altenheim, would be one of the first residents of the Altenheim. She took up residence at the Altenheim when it first opened in June 1902.

The group took its first step in establishing the Saint Louis Altenheim when it sent Gustav Cramer and Jacob Walter to Cincinnati, Ohio, to visit an existing Altenheim there. The purpose of their trip was to inspect equipment and furnishings and to inquire about how the residence was organized and managed. They determined that the cost of establishing such a residence in St. Louis would be around \$75,000.

Generous contributions followed. For example, Colonel Charles G. Stifel offered a prime piece of real estate but graciously turned that into an \$8,000 cash donation when the land proved unsuitable. Gustav Cramer himself donated \$4,000, which was a hefty sum of cash in those days. However, fundraising slowed dramatically.



*Saint Louis Altenheim dining room overlooking the Mississippi River.*

Meanwhile, a group of six concerned ladies, led by Emma Cramer and Anna Eberhardt, decided unanimously to issue a "general appeal" to the women of the community, and on April 19, 1899, the Ladies' Society of the Saint Louis Altenheim was founded.

This fellowship of German women was remarkable. It took the men until March 4, 1900, to officially recognize the Men's Society. At the same time, the Ladies' Society was already hard at work. Its stated purpose was "to further the interests of the Saint Louis Altenheim to the best of [our] ability, to assist in raising funds for its operation, and in cooperation with the Men's

Society be actively involved in administering the institution."

It's interesting to note, says Clark, that back then, a high percentage of the St. Louis population that had a heavy concentration of German immigrants was speaking German. To further its cause, the Ladies' Society directed frequent fundraising events the Christmas Bazaar being its most heralded all the while seeing their membership leap significantly. During its first year alone, the society welcomed 250 new members; membership numbered 450 during the second year, a testament to the community's belief in Altenheim.

**The Altenheim's First Home.** In 1901, the Men's Society also integral in the Altenheim's formation began negotiations to purchase a fantastic South Broadway villa, the Charles P. Chouteau Mansion. The Ladies' Society also contributed \$10,000 of the funds they had raised. Subsequent renovations to the initial undertaking costing \$50,000 and expansions turned the 15-resident-room Chouteau Mansion into a 42-room residence. In 1904, the Saint Louis Altenheim's superintendent reported a total of 60 residents.

One of the residence's best-known benefactors was the Adolphus Busch family—a testament to Mr. Busch's commitment to the residence a plaque just at the Altenheim's entrance. Between 1898 and 1902, he donated \$10,000. At his passing in 1914 he bequeathed \$50,000, and his wife Lilly subsequently carried on that spirit of generosity with numerous gifts to the residence.