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March 2011

Researching Your House's History

By Donna Hanousek with Matthew Gilmore

The February Preservation Café, *House History*, drew over 50 people to hear local historian Matthew Gilmore. Mr. Gilmore provided a mini-version of his evening-long course in historic building and neighborhood research. This Preservation Café was first in a series, and focused on "The Buildings," explaining the research required to get the most basic building block of information: the construction date. The second and final part of the series, to be held on April 20 (see calendar for details), will focus on identifying "The People" who lived in the houses.

Where to Start

The best place to start is in the Washingtoniana Section of the Martin Luther King main library in DC. The reference librarians there can help you locate the proper databases and other resources such as maps and atlases. There are many different research sources available there. Some of the information you're looking for may be at the National Archives.

Lot and Square

Mr. Gilmore explained that it all begins with knowing your lot and square numbers (from current and

historical/tax and records). This is the key to researching records, as the lot and square is the legal description of your property. There are two sets of lot numbers. The earliest is the record lot, which is numbered in succession from "1", and is shown as "part of 1, etc." when subdivided (although sometimes subdivided lots were given new, larger numbers). The second set of lot numbers is the tax lot from your property tax bill, which is an 800 series that was added at the end of the 19th century to account for multiple buildings on one lot. You

Continued on page 6

CHRS Board Elections Coming in Spring 2011

In Spring 2011 there will be an election for the following positions on the CHRS board of directors: President, First Vice-President, Second Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and four At-Large Members.

A CHRS nominating committee (Gary Peterson, Barbara Eck, Elizabeth Nelson, and Beth Purcell) is currently identifying individuals to nominate for these board positions. Any member who wishes to propose herself or himself as a nominee should send a statement of interest and qualifications. If you wish to propose another member, you must also submit a written statement from that person.

Please send the information to CHRS, P.O. Box 15264, Washington, DC 20003 or via e-mail to CapHRS@aol.com. To be considered, proposals must be received by April 13, 2011.

Also in this issue

ARTICLES

C100 Streetcar Report	3
Historic Preservation Briefs.....	4
New Director at Hill Center	5
Vacant Buildings—Part II.....	11

COLUMNS

President's Column	2
Looking Back on Capitol Hill	10
CHRS Supporters	11

LOOKING AHEAD

March Preservation Café.....	2
Rosedale History Presentation.....	5
House and Garden Tour	8
Tour Tickets Order Form.....	9
Mark Your Calendar.....	12

President's Column: Earth Day Cleanup for Trash-Free Anacostia River

By Beth Purcell

Trash threatens the health of the Anacostia River. We have all seen it. And the tidal area of the river, (including Kingman Island and RFK Stadium), has less trash than some other sections, such as Nash Run in Northeast Washington. Many of us volunteer to clean up trash, but wonder if it's hopeless—it's estimated that over 20,000 tons of trash enter the river annually. But there is hope and progress, as shown by a demonstration trash trap at Nash Run.

Nash Run is a tributary of the Anacostia River, covering a sub-watershed of 460 acres. Nash Run enters the river at a storm sewer pipe west of Kenilworth Avenue,

NE, between Polk and Douglas Streets. A very large volume of trash was entering the river at Nash Run (including Styrofoam, plastic cups, bottles, and cans). A DC Department of the Environment (DDOE) survey found that Nash Run had 140 pieces of trash in a 1,000-square foot area (vs. less than 40 pieces at Kingman Island). In 2010 DDOE installed a trash trap at Nash Run to prevent trash from entering the river. The trap is approximately 280 feet west of Anacostia Avenue, NE. Volunteers empty it several times a year. In one year the trap caught over 66,000 pounds of trash that was kept out of the river. It's a major success, and

shows what can be accomplished. We need more of these.

Every year, on Earth Day, volunteers remove trash from the Anacostia River. It's important work, and very worthwhile. Earth Day this year is April 9, 2011. Come help if you can. See *Mark Your Calendar!* for details.

For more information on efforts to clean up the Anacostia River, see:

- Anacostia River Initiatives, under "Information," www.green.dc.gov
- Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership, <http://anacostia.net>
- Anacostia Watershed Society, www.anacostiaws.org ★

March 16 Preservation Café Will Be *Roofs 102*

By Shauna Holmes

If you're looking for solid information about maintenance and repair of roofs, come to *Roofs 102*, CHRS's March 16 Preservation Café, where David Lindeman, who heads a DC roofing company, will bring over 30 years' experience to provide recommendations and answer questions from the audience. Mr. Lindeman, who has worked on many Capitol Hill roofs and says his kind of expertise isn't the sort one learns in school, runs L&M Contracting, which has received the *Washington*

Consumers' Checkbook's top rating for quality.

This Preservation Café is the second of a series and follows *Roofs 101*, which Mr. Lindeman presented at the November 2009 Preservation Café. Whereas his 2009 presentation dealt primarily with low-sloped roofs common on Capitol Hill rowhouses, *Roofs 102* will focus on other styles frequently found on the Hill, including mansard and pitched roofs, as well as such features as turrets and parapets that interface with various

kinds of rowhouse roofs. He will also discuss types of roofing materials, how they should be cared for, how to identify problems, and when roofs need to be repaired.

Put *Roofs 102* on your calendar and come to the CHRS Preservation Café on Wednesday, March 16. The Café will run from 6:30-7:15 pm in the downstairs room at Ebenezers Coffeehouse at 2nd and F Streets, NE. The event is free, accessible, and open to all in the Capitol Hill community; no reservations are required. ★

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To reach any of the above, please contact the Society offices at (202) 543-0425 or via e-mail: CapHRS@aol.com.

www.CHRS.org

Celebrating more than 50 years helping to preserve and protect Capitol Hill's residential character, the Society is the largest civic association on Capitol Hill, and one of the largest in the District of Columbia. From the beginning, the Society has played a key role in maintaining the diverse, residential character of our neighborhood. With your participation, we will continue to do so for many years to come.

To start or renew a CHRS membership:

- ★ On the web at www.CHRS.org
- ★ Call (202) 543-0425; choose option 2
- ★ Pick up a form at one of our meetings

Starting at just \$25 per year for a single membership, it's a great deal.

Committee of 100 Streetcar Report

By Barbara Eck

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City has prepared a detailed report, *Building a World Class Streetcar System for a World Class City*, that assesses the DC Department of Transportation's 37-mile streetcar system plan. It provides a summary of current challenges and official actions to date and puts forth seven recommendations to further advance streetcars in DC. CHRS Board members Monte Edwards and Dick Wolf participated in the analysis of the system and contributed to the recommendations that were recently presented to the City Council.

The group of Committee of 100 members drove and photographed the entire 37-mile route to develop a better understanding of existing conditions on the route and to assess the likelihood that a streetcar line would stimulate economic development. The group concluded that the proposed route plan should boost investor confidence in several areas that need new centers of economic life, but that further study and refinement are needed along some routes. (For instance, the current plan has a few segments of the streetcar lines running through business districts with no back alleys for deliveries. A delivery truck parked on the line would create major snarls so the report recommends moving those sections to nearby streets.)

The seven overall recommendations for achieving a well-planned, world-class street car system include:

- Develop a land-use plan to strengthen the neighborhoods that the streetcars will serve
- Establish a baseline assessment of streetcar technology worldwide and move rapidly toward a wireless system
- Restrict procurement of new streetcars to those that can be converted to wireless technology
- Comply with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and all other environmental and preservation laws
- Rethink some routes and develop a scaled street plan for each phase
- Engage the public in substantive and sustained collaboration.

The full report is available at:
www.committeeof100.net/Media/streetcar-report.html. ★

- Develop a streetcar business, financial, and governance plan and an equipment and facilities master plan

Historic Preservation Briefs

By Nancy Metzger

DC Court of Appeals Hears Oral Arguments in 227 Pennsylvania Avenue Case

Judges Michael Farrell, Noël Kramer, and Vanessa Ruiz of the DC Court of Appeals heard oral arguments in the Mayor's Agent case involving 227 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, on February 17, 2011. Attorney Andrea Ferster presented the Capitol Hill Restoration Society's case, while lawyers from the DC Attorney General's office and the Heritage Foundation, owner of 227 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, presented the opposing side.

The case began in September 2008 when the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) approved a third-story addition on the distinctive 1880s store with a requirement that it be set back 25 feet from the front façade in order to limit visibility and minimize visual impact of the addition. Other proposed alterations including a new basement floor, a new rear addition, and a reconstructed storefront were approved by the HPRB. The Heritage Foundation appealed the decision on the third story setback to the Mayor's Agent. Instead of long-time Mayor's Agent Judge Rohulamin Quander hearing the case, Harriet Tregoning, Director of the DC Office of Planning, heard the case in December 2008. Her decision, issued in September 2009, allowed a third-floor addition to cover the entire structure. Concerned about the implications of the ruling for the interpretation of the Historic Preservation Law in the future as well as the visual integrity of the building and a significant, historically intact row of buildings, CHRS appealed the decision to the DC Court of Appeals. A long series of filings, requests for delays, requests for dismissal, briefs,

and rebuttals consumed the rest of 2009 and 2010.

The oral arguments were essentially a distillation of the points argued in the briefs and rebuttals. CHRS has focused on the Mayor's Agent's unprecedented view that when both the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) and the HPRB have jurisdiction, CFA's views take precedence (although CFA is not charged with upholding the city's Historic Preservation Law). The Mayor's Agent's decision not to give due regard to the expert opinions of the HPRB also figured in the oral arguments as did the timeliness issue of when the appeal was first filed.

February 17 was a sunny "spring-like" day and during the oral arguments sunlight streamed in the large arched windows of the courtroom in the Old City Hall, parts of which date to 1820. Set back in Judiciary Square, away from the bustle of the Moultrie Courthouse and the Police Headquarters across the street, the simple but elegant building is one of the few reminders of the rather fashionable area that once surrounded Judiciary Square. The striking Ionic portico remains at the original entrance but during recent extensive renovations a two-story glass atrium was constructed on the "back" side that serves as the new accessible entry and security check point. The Court of Appeals, DC's highest court, moved into the building in June 2009.

Catching Up with The Maples Project

The transformation of Friendship House at 619 D Street, SE, from the site of a social services agency into a condominium residence under its historic name, "The Maples,"

received preliminary approval at the December 2010 Historic Preservation Review Board meeting.

The 1795 landmark building and later additions will be retained and rehabbed and five new residences will be built for a total of 17 residences of varying sizes. The front lawn facing South Carolina Avenue will be excavated for an underground parking garage after archaeological investigation and documentation and reinstalled later with a more historic slope. The applicants were directed to continue refining the plans as outlined in the staff report, developing a restoration plan for the landmark, detailing new construction, and restudying the landscape plan.

While enthusiastic about the restoration of the historic buildings, CHRS's Historic Preservation Committee advocated a restudy of the landscape plan of the new construction to better resolve the complexities inherent in this site with the addition of new buildings while still retaining the sense of an open lawn. It is expected that the architectural firm, Cunningham Quill, will return to the Board with revisions sometime this spring. ☆

Diana Ingraham Named Executive Director of Hill Center

By Lisa Dale Jones

The Hill Center has found its Executive Director. The Naval Hospital Foundation Board named Diana Bosworth Ingraham as its first Executive Director in January 2011. She began her duties in February.

Ingraham will manage the new community center that opens this summer and will offer educational and cultural opportunities to Capitol Hill residents and visitors.

For the past 13 years, Ingraham has run US Independents, a consulting company that provides media and business expertise to national and international independent filmmakers, public media outlets and other nonprofit organizations. Her clients have included the Smithsonian Institution, the American Architectural Foundation, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the American Film Institute (AFI). She served as the founding organizer of the international film and media conference that accompanies the annual AFI-Discovery Channel Silverdocs Documentary Festival.

"Diana is a real find," said Nicky Cymrot, President of the Old Naval Foundation's Board of Directors. "The Foundation is delighted to have someone with a wealth of professional experiences that so well suit the many needs of the Hill Center and the diverse community it will serve."

In addition to a range of classes, exhibits, lectures, performances and social programs, the campus will provide a unique venue for special events and conferences; a family-friendly café in the old carriage house; as well as office space for local nonprofits.

"The Hill Center will bring rich opportunities to one of the most exciting communities in the Washington area," said Ingraham. "I look forward to spearheading such a vibrant new venture."

Ingraham was named after the Foundation undertook a nationwide executive search. She lives in Bethesda, Maryland with her husband and two children. ★



PHOTO COURTESY HILL CENTER

Diana Ingraham

Coming Next Month: Development History of the Rosedale Neighborhood

Tuesday, March 8, 2011 | 6:15–8:00 pm

Rosedale Recreation Center, 500 19th Street, NE

The Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS) and the Rosedale Citizens' Alliance (RCA) are sponsoring a presentation on historic buildings by EHT Traceries, a well-known architectural history firm.

This presentation will describe the development history of the area approximately bounded by H Street/Benning Road (north); East Capitol Street (south); 15th Street (west); and 19th Street (east). Rosedale, which lies within these boundaries, is a distinctive neighborhood that developed over the late 19th and early 20th centuries, just a stone's throw from the H Street commercial corridor. Find out who developed the neighborhood and learn about the different types of architecture and buildings from knowledgeable architectural historians.

This event is free and open to the public and brought to you in part by the CHRS *Beyond the Boundaries* program, which seeks to promote the appreciation of neighborhood history and support historic preservation efforts outside the boundaries of the Capitol Hill Historic District.

You can get details about all of our events at www.chrs.org.

Please note that the program will begin with a social hour of cookies and cider from 6:15–6:45 pm, followed by a Welcome from the RCA and a brief CHRS Business Meeting. The featured presentation will begin at 7:00 pm.

House History, *continued from cover*

can start with your current tax lot from your property tax bill and work backwards with historic maps to obtain all lot numbers ever associated with your lot.

Historic Maps and Atlases

Mr. Gilmore recommends starting your exploration with an historic map/atlas. From those, you can find your original lot and square and other valuable information, such as whether the building was brick or frame. You can also see the rest of your neighborhood, learning information such as early street and subdivision names and identifying institutions.

The earliest maps of DC were the Boshke maps, which include downtown Washington in 1859 and the entire District in 1861. These just show building footprints, but no lots and squares. Next chronologically is the Hopkins Atlas, which does show lots and squares. It was published in 1887 for the entire District, and after that was broken down into three volumes. The 1893 edition included Capitol Hill in Volume 2. Hopkins Atlases were taken over by another company, G.W. Baist, which continued to publish them in the same format from 1903 to 1967 (Capitol Hill can still be found in Volume 2). The Baist maps included color-coding for brick and frame dwellings, more information on utilities and street paving, both earlier and proposed street names, and identified the names of large property owners and subdivisions. (Some Baist maps are online through the Library of Congress website: <http://memory.loc.gov>; search the word "Baist".)

The Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps began in 1888. They were published from 1888–1999. These maps also showed lot and square, as well as building footprint, and provided some information on water lines. The

original Sanborn map was updated continuously by literally pasting over the old information with new information, obscuring details for any specific point in time. Sanborn provided two pages of maps for each square, one that showed the building footprint and shape, the other showing the lot and square. (Selected early Sanborns can be found online at the Library of Congress website: www.loc.gov/rr/geogmap/sanborn).

In working with the maps, it is useful to look at the glossary/index at the beginning to see what the various icons and colors mean. It should also be noted that the earliest versions of the maps sometimes showed only small portions of Capitol Hill. You can find these maps in the Washingtoniana Division of the Library (where they are on microfilm as well), in the Kiplinger Research Library at the Historical Society of Washington, D.C., or in the Map Room at the Library of Congress.

To Find the Age of your Building

If your building was constructed prior to 1877 you must do tax record research to date your property. This is complicated, but you can search the tax assessment books for the assessed value on your lot and square, looking for a jump in value to indicate building construction. To narrow your time frame for the tax research, you can look at historic maps to determine when your building footprint appears on the lot. You can find Real Estate Tax Assessment information at the Washingtoniana Division (on microfilm), the Historical Society, and at the National Archives.

If your building was constructed between 1877 and 1949, you can find the permit on microfilm, and subsequent permits for alterations, at either the Washingtoniana Division or the National Archives. Some permits, 1877–1915, may indicate that the building plans have been microfilmed and removed. These plans may be at

National Archives II in College Park, Maryland. (Note: Permits and plans issued between 1915 and 1949 have been destroyed.) Later permits and plans are at the DC Archives. (The DC Archives also contains the DC Engineering Commissioner's Record, 1897-1953, which may provide information on services established or improvements made on or near the property.)

The DC Historic Preservation Office recently had a database of building permit information created, referred to as the Kraft database, which contains a data entry for most of the "permits to build" in the District from 1877 to 1949. These provide basic information, but it is advisable to pull the actual permit as a double check and to augment the summary data found in the database. This database can be found in the Washingtoniana Division. There is an incomplete, but still large, summary data base on the CHRS website (www.chrs.org).

Deeds

From 1927 to 1985, the Washington Board of Realtors kept an index on real estate transactions, which you can find on microfiche at the Washingtoniana Division. You can also research deeds at the Recorder of Deeds. They are arranged by lot and square, and they are indexed from 1900–1923 and from 1937 to the present. For research from 1792 to 1900, you need the name of either the grantee or the grantor (which you may have found during your tax research). Deeds from 1936 to the present are online (create your own user ID and password): <http://bit.ly/htDzMF>

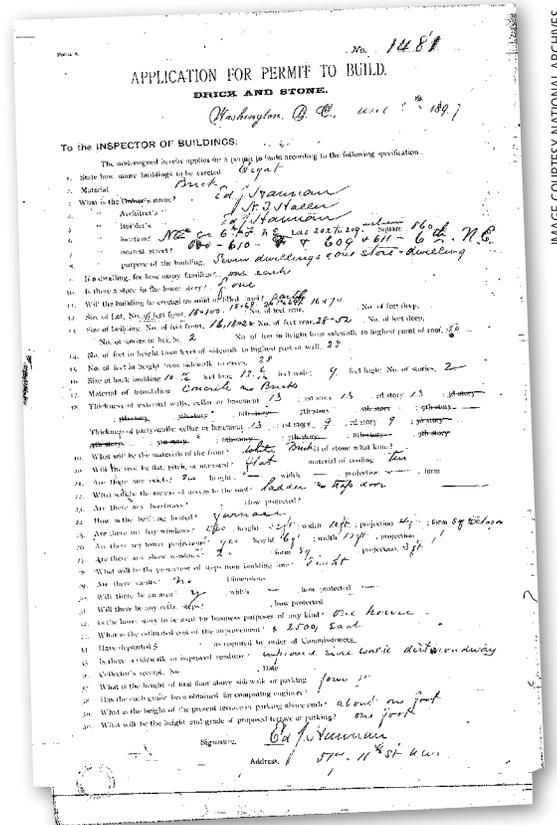
Surveyor Records

At the DC Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) (now located at 110 4th Street, SW, at the Waterfront Metro station) you can research the records of the DC



TOP: 600 F Street, NE. This Queen Anne brick building is part of a row designed by the well-known architect N.T. Haller, and is a handsome example of the combination store and dwelling anchoring a residential row, which was common in the 19th century.

RIGHT: The "Permit to Build" that includes 600 F Street, NE, provides a wealth of information. For example, this row of seven houses plus one house with corner store was built for \$20,000 in 1897 and was originally constructed with a white brick front.



Office of the Surveyor. These maps are particularly valuable for early research—they show how properties were subdivided and re-subdivided—which may give you key information on when your house was built.

Other Sources

You can research your address through the online search engine of the historic *Washington Post* (the ProQuest database 1877–1994 is available free to DC public Library cardholders [login through dclibrary.org on your home computer] or onsite at the National Archives or Library of Congress). There are also several good sources for historic photograph research. The Library of Congress has many collections online; go to: www.loc.gov/pictures. Most have extremely limited indexing and captioning, so it pays to be creative, diligent, and exhaustive. There are also Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Historic American Engineering

Record (HAER) collections, which record achievements in architecture and engineering. While you might not find a photo of your house, you might find photos of its architectural style and type. You may also find your photos of your house by looking up nearby institutions such as churches, hospitals, and schools. Your house might show up in a photo that was taken of one of these.

Another source, searchable online, is the Wymer Collection at the Historical Society, which contains photos of neighborhoods throughout the District from 1948–1952 (check out <http://historydc.org> and look under the Library link). You can also research the *Washington Star* photo collection at the Washingtoniana Division.

A few other useful online sources include: DCRA's Property Information Verification System (<http://pivs.dcrd.gov/property/search>), which will give you ownership, permits, photos, and

other current information about every property in DC. Many interesting old photos from the Library of Congress can be found at www.shorpy.com. ★

Matthew Gilmore is the editor of H-DC, a discussion list devoted to the history of the District of Columbia. Mr. Gilmore has been giving local history research workshops since 1995, drawing on his experience as a reference librarian in the Washingtoniana Division of the D.C. Public Library. He has co-authored or authored four books, three on Washington History, the most recent on Foggy Bottom. He will be happy to answer any questions you have via e-mail: dc-edit@mail.h-net.msu.edu.

Some of the questions and answers from the Preservation Café presentation are available on the CHRS website version of the newsletter at www.chrs.org.

The 54th Annual House and Garden Tour—Lincoln Park to the Old Naval Hospital

This year's House and Garden Tour will include about a dozen properties between 9th and 13th Streets SE below Lincoln Park to Pennsylvania Avenue. The Tour normally presents a cross-section of Capitol Hill properties and this year's Tour is no exception. The oldest house on the Tour dates to 1853 while the youngest is from 1964. Several four-floor houses are included—so be prepared to climb if you wish to see everything! There will be one converted carriage house and at least one commercial property located in a stable. The Old Naval Hospital will be on the Tour, but perhaps, depending on the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy, only the first floor. Shuttle bus service will not be available but the Tour route is less than two miles from Eastern Market Metro to Lincoln Park and back.

Additional information about the Tour will be posted on the CHRS website as it becomes available, including interior and exterior photographs, www.chrs.org.

If you are interested in volunteering as a docent on the weekend of the Tour, please contact Dori Fengler at dorifengler@yahoo.com.

Get Your Discounted Tickets to the 54th Annual House and Garden Tour

Saturday and Sunday, May 7–8, 2011

Dear CHRS Member,

As a valued CHRS member, you are invited to join us for the 54th Annual Mothers' Day House and Garden Tour. More than a dozen fabulous and very diverse homes are included on the Tour. The event, our biggest annual fundraiser, provides us with much-needed unrestricted dollars to finance the important work of preservation on Capitol Hill. Your support will help fund education programs, impact studies, the website, and our award-winning newsletter, among other projects.

Protecting the historic fabric of our unique community is vital. With your tax-deductible contribution and purchase of discounted member tickets, we can continue this work and consider other preservation projects that are in need of our attention.

Your membership entitles you to purchase four (4) discounted tickets at the bargain price of only \$20 each. Nonmembers pay \$25 per ticket and \$30 on Tour weekend. And if you can, please consider making a tax-deductible contribution by becoming an Individual Sponsor. The more unrestricted dollars we raise, the harder we can work for Capitol Hill.

Using the order form in this newsletter and returning it by mail or fax is the only way you can take advantage of the discount. You must return the form with full payment before April 10, but an earlier reply would be much appreciated.

Thank you again for your continued support. As an almost exclusively volunteer-run organization, member contributions make a great deal of difference so please be as generous as you can. And why not treat someone on Tour weekend! I look forward to seeing you on the Tour.

Beth Purcell
President

Visit the CHRS Web Site

The CHRS website, at www.chrs.org, is organized into three sections. The middle column contains current news with occasional links to more information. The left side is the menu area and contains links to standard subjects (e.g., Coming Events, Publications) and to other resources, such as Capitol Hill-related websites. The right hand column primarily contains links to web pages about CHRS and recent presentations at CHRS events. In the future, many items found in the *CHRS News* will include links to the CHRS website as well as other outside resources in order to provide additional information and background data when appropriate.

The CHRS website will undergo a slow renovation over the next six months with additional types of materials, such as the addition of house histories. If you have suggestions, comments, information that you would like to share, please contact the webmasters at CHRS420@gmail.com.

54TH ANNUAL

HOUSE & GARDEN TOUR

MOTHER'S DAY WEEKEND  MAY 7-8, 2011

Individual Donations and Ticket Order Form

Tax-Deductible Contributions

All will be listed in the Tour brochure if received by April 1.

- President's Circle** (> \$1,000 to \$5,000, 12 complimentary tickets. Gift less \$240 is tax deductible)
- Benefactor** (\$1,000, 8 complimentary tickets, \$840 deductible)
- Patron** (\$500, 4 complimentary tickets, \$420 deductible)
- Sponsor** (\$250, 2 complimentary tickets, \$210 deductible)
- Contributor** (\$100, completely deductible)
- Funder** (\$50, completely deductible)

My/our name(s) should be listed as follows: _____

Member Tour Tickets

For tickets only, mail or fax with full payment by April 10.

_____ Member Tour tickets @ \$20.00 each (limit 4 per household)

_____ Additional Tour tickets @ 25.00 each

Payment Information

Sum of contribution and tickets. *Your cancelled check or credit card statement will be your receipt.*

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____ payable to CHRS, Inc.

Please bill my credit card \$ _____ Mastercard Visa

Number: _____ Expiration: _____

Signature: _____

Tickets will be mailed approximately two weeks before the Tour.

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www.chrs.org

Looking Back on Capitol Hill

By Nancy Metzger

We all know that going to Eastern Market is just not the same without the gentle presence of Chris Calomiris, who died on January 29, 2011, at the age of 86. Short in stature with a quiet voice, Mr. Calomiris drew his customers back with his unfailing courtesy, sparkling eyes and a smile that welcomed all (not to mention the fruit and vegetables). A produce merchant at Eastern Market since 1963, he had followed in his father's footsteps. Thomas, a Greek immigrant from Sparta, started in the produce business with a wagon and eventually had produce stands at Center Market and other markets of the time. Chris grew up on Capitol Hill in a three-story house at 221 First Street, NE, that was home to an aunt, uncle and five cousins as well as his father, mother and brother. The house was demolished for the Dirksen Senate Office Building. In a 2001 interview with Bonny Wolf for the Overbeck Oral History Project (www.capitolhillhistory.org), Chris talked about his life in the produce business and his years growing up on the Hill:

CALOMIRIS: . . . I remember my old days. The Capitol's trees, as kids we used to think we were the apes, Tarzan and the apes. We liked to swing from one branch to the other. There wasn't a room in the Capitol where as kids we didn't say, "Let's investigate, see what's in this." Against the law, we used to go there when the Capitol was closed. We used to go across the street to the Senate Office Building. In this basement they used to have trolleys going from that Senate Office Building to the Capitol . . .

So, we used to go underground, walking to the other side where the Capitol is and come up to the Capitol rotunda. Okay? There was a window

we knew that we used to open up in the rear of the Capitol and go out and go to Greek school [at 6th and C Streets, SW].

WOLF: When the Capitol was closed?

CALOMIRIS: Was closed. And, man, I tell you it's spooky in that place where they've got the statues—statuette place, with dim lights. It's spooky as hell at night . . . We used to do crazy things. I used to go up and down the dome, where the Indian is, the statue. That used to be our playground. We used to go—they used to have a special echo effect on the last one up there. I'd say, "Hey, you! You with the baldy, put a hat on!" We were the kids. And they'd look around and see where the sounds were coming from, you know."

WOLF: So the Capitol—I mean that was just, it was a big park.

CALOMIRIS: Yes. Oh, that was our park. We had—all the community used to go. They used to have the bands, the Marine, the Navy and the Army bands. And all the neighborhood could get together, especially all the ethnic groups. Get together and lay on a blanket and just sit there and listen and jabber. ★

Chris was at the Market the weekend before he died. I went back to the refrigerator case to pick up parsnips and lettuce and found him sitting on a chair, resting but still keeping an eye on things. When greeting him, his hands felt cold but we agreed how much better the Market felt with heat. After a little more conversation, Chris said, "I'm thinking how much we have to be thankful for—food, our families and neighbors, this country, this market. We have so much to be thankful for."

—Nancy Metzger

Vacant and Neglected Buildings—Part II

By Nancy Metzger

An article in the February *CHRS News* recounted the downward saga of the house at 820 C Street, SE, victim of an owner who would not make much-needed repairs yet would not sell to would-be buyers. A mix-up with the property tax assessments also played a significant part. The demolition was even more shocking because it had been such a long time since a building was lost in the historic district.

Back in 2003, CHRS made remediation of abandoned properties a major effort; Gary Peterson, CHRS point person on nuisance properties, kept a large binder of reported properties and the official responses to the reports. CHRS and the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) initiated a series of meetings to examine how DCRA was meeting the challenge of dealing with vacant properties and what a community could do to assist the process. Rob Nevitt, then-President of CHRS, reported in a February 2004 President's Column about the meetings: "Each of these meetings provides both DCRA and CHRS participants with an opportunity to critique the process and adjust procedures accordingly. For instance, CHRS now knows that it is more efficient for DCRA to process several addresses at one time; what the critical deadlines are; and how to confirm the status of a report. DCRA is able to use some specific Capitol Hill addresses to fine tune the process and iron out glitches. (And, of course, those addresses get immediate scrutiny and everyone is sure that those addresses are 'in the system.')

One of the vacant and neglected buildings highlighted during those sessions was 514 3rd Street, NE.

Vacant for decades, the building lost its roof and most of the interior. While the city eventually replaced the roof, it was harder—and definitely harder on the neighbors—to deal with the flock of pigeons that would fly in and out through broken windows. The sound of a hundred pigeons cooing is not conducive to rest or good humor. CHRS asked that the pigeons be evicted and the windows boarded; DCRA reported that the windows were boarded. CHRS looked—pigeons still going in and out second-story windows; pigeons still cooing. Finally, the problem became clear: DCRA regulations required only that ground floor and basement-level windows be boarded against *human* entry—the upper windows were not a concern. But they were finally boarded against further pigeon intrusion.

Over the years, Charles McMillion, a nearby resident and former CHRS Board member, kept tabs on the property, talking to city officials at each twist of the story. The owners finally sold the house to the city after much negotiation. (Buildings caught in estate disputes are notoriously very slow to become clear to sell.) In January 2009 it was on a list of properties to be auctioned by the city for development. One week before the auction, it was pulled and put into a new affordable housing program. Neighbors, CHRS and others were hoping for a new owner and an expeditious and sensitive rehabilitation. But finally, in the spring of 2010, the DC Dept. of Housing and Community Development forwarded plans to the Historic Preservation Review Board and DCRA for approval and permits. It is now undergoing rehabilitation, potentially as a 2-unit flat.

Although CHRS does not have its monthly meetings with DCRA any longer, we still keep a record of vacant buildings and forward new addresses to the DCRA to be investigated and added to the list for a higher tax assessment. If you know of a building on Capitol Hill that is vacant and neglected, please notify the CHRS office (CapHRS@aol.com; 543-0425). It does not have to be in the historic district. ★

Welcome CHRS Supporters

We thank the following new members, patrons, and sponsors.

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Capitol Hill Restoration Society
420 Tenth Street, SE
Washington, DC 20003

Mark Your Calendar!

MARCH

7 Monday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Nancy Metzger, nancymetzger@verizon.net, 546-1034.

8 Tuesday, 6:15 pm
CHRS and the Rosedale Citizens' Alliance (RCA) are sponsoring a presentation by well-known local architectural history firm, EHT Traceries, on the history of the buildings in the greater Capitol Hill/Northeast area between 15th and 19th Streets, NE, and featuring the distinctive Rosedale neighborhood. Details: Donna Hanousek, hanousek@earthlink.net, 727-0789.

10 Thursday, 7:30 pm
CHRS Zoning Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Gary Peterson, PGaryl@aol.com, 547-7969.

15 Tuesday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor. Details: Beth Purcell, eap1@mindspring.com, 622-4303.

16 Wednesday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Preservation Café, "Roofs 102" with David Lindeman of L&M Contracting. Ebenezers Coffeehouse, 2nd & F Streets, NE, downstairs; free, open to the public, no reservations needed. Details: Shauna Holmes, shaunaholmes@yahoo.com, 546-5211.

APRIL

4 Monday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Nancy Metzger, nancymetzger@verizon.net, 546-1034.

9 Saturday, 8:30 am-noon
Anacostia River Earth Day Cleanup; Kingman Island as well as other locations. Details: swendel@anacostiaaws.org, 301-699-6204.

14 Thursday, 7:30 pm
CHRS Zoning Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Gary Peterson, PGaryl@aol.com, 547-7969.

16 Saturday, 10 am-3 pm
Frager's Spring Convention, Eastern Market, North Hall. Details: apollo@fragersdc.com, 460-8583.

19 Tuesday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor. Details: Beth Purcell, eap1@mindspring.com, 622-4303.

20 Wednesday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Preservation Café, "Researching the History of Your House" featuring Matthew Gilmore (Part 2 of a 2-part series). Ebenezers Coffeehouse, 2nd & F Streets, NE, downstairs; free, open to the public, no reservations needed. Details: Shauna Holmes, shaunaholmes@yahoo.com, 546-5211.