



NEWS

www.chrs.org

February 2013

Swampoodle Rising: Projects Abound In and Around Union Station

By Drury Tallant

In the 25 years since Union Station reopened, the surrounding area has attracted considerable development activity. In addition to the rapid development of the North of Massachusetts Avenue (NOMA) neighborhood north and west of Union Station, the rowhouse neighborhood immediately to the east has also become highly desirable. So much so that a 2012 Forbes Magazine article (<http://onforb.es/10QdTUE>) named the area one of “America’s Hippest Hipster neighborhoods.” The western portion of H Street is the “Swampoodle” residential

neighborhood. This area—north of Massachusetts and east of Second Street—straddles the F Street boundary of the Capitol Hill Historic District. The ongoing recovery of H Street as a thriving residential, entertainment, restaurant, and commercial corridor has spurred numerous projects at the western end of H Street and within the northwestern section of the Capitol Hill Historic District.

In addition to large residential projects recently completed, such as Senate Square (on the site of the former Children’s Museum) and the

rental apartments, and other street level retail. One block to the north, AVA Apartments’ 138-unit building will also soon open at Fourth & I Streets, NE. It’s hard to believe that barely a dozen years ago neighbors had a hard fight to prevent a block-long gas station at the 360 H Street site.

Capitol Place

In early February—diagonally across Third & H Streets from 360 H Street—the Capitol Place PUD (formerly by Dreyfus, now Station Townhouses LLC) will break ground on a further

Loree Grand one block to the north, others are under construction, about to begin, and proposed. In May of 2013 the 360 H Street project by Steuart Investments will be complete and includes a Giant Food Store, 215

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Union Station in 1921.

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IMAGE COURTESY SHORPY.COM

President's Column: President's Day

By Janet Quigley

In February we celebrate Presidents' Day. It still gives me a thrill to think of all the U.S. Presidents who had Capitol Hill addresses at some point in their political careers. Washington had a house near what's now Union Station. The Lincoln family rented an apartment near First and Independence, SE. Jefferson roomed in a boarding house near New Jersey Avenue and C, SE. Even our current President had a pied-à-terre off Stanton Park. So much ambition and accomplishment in such a compact community, but that is par for the course on Capitol Hill. I like to think the Hill brings out the best in all its residents.

Recently CHRS had the pleasure of endorsing a promising young nominee for the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB). Charles Wilson is a driving force in the Anacostia renaissance, dedicated to historic preservation and community development. He serves as President of the Historic Anacostia Block Association, which created the Anacostia Heritage Trail (with Cultural Tourism DC) and has secured a remarkable \$1.5 million in grants to restore historic Anacostia housing. A lawyer and MBA, he also cultivates local leadership and community growth through the River East Emerging Leaders nonprofit organization. With such impressive credentials we expect he will be a good fit at HPRB.

Speaking of fits, I have been following the Zoning Regulation Rewrite progress with puzzlement as to how some of the changes fit with Capitol Hill. Certainly parts of the regulations need updating, but it appears we do not have many of the problems they propose to solve. Is the ZRR a one-size-fits-all solution that doesn't? The rewrite process

is far from over, and CHRS will be involved, as will other organizations, in advocating results that make sense for Capitol Hill. ★

Were You There? Remembering the 1963 March on Washington

Capitol Hill Village and the Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project are co-sponsoring a cross-generational commemoration of the historic 1963 March on Washington. It will take place as part of Black History Month to mark the 50th anniversary year of the March. The event will include a panel of people who were there, sharing personal stories of their experiences during the March. Prior to the event, there will also be a contest for students at participating Capitol Hill middle and high schools to write their own "I Have a Dream" speech. The winners will receive scholarship money and will be invited to deliver their speeches at the event.

Saturday, February 23, 1:30–4 pm (doors open at 1 pm)

Lutheran Church of the Reformation, 212 East Capitol Street, NE

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Lisa Dale Jones and Kelly Vielmo, editors
Jean Kohanek, design & layout

WEBMASTERS

Donna Breslin, Paul Cromwell, Scott Knight

OFFICE MANAGER

Gloria Junge

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.

Permits 101: Ask the Experts

Many Capitol Hill residents are considering making home improvements in 2013, and they are not alone. The latest quarterly Harvard-sponsored Leading Indicator of Remodeling Activity (LIRA) study finds that the remodeling recovery is underway, and predicts home improvement spending will increase almost 20% this year, thanks to low financing costs and other factors.

DC agencies have been working hard to streamline the permit approval process. Does that kitchen upgrade require a permit? What about refurbishing windows? Repairing retaining walls? What is the fastest way to get a permit? The answers might surprise you.

To help community members navigate the home improvement maze, CHRS will host a forum called "Permits 101: What You Need to Know" featuring officials from the District of Columbia's Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) and the Historic Preservation Office (HPO). The speakers will provide overviews of their agencies' residential requirements and take one-on-one questions after a group Q&A.

Rabbiah "Robbie" Sabbakhan, DCRA's Chief Building Official, Permitting & Inspections, will explain which situations require a permit and will describe how DCRA has streamlined its services, including online permit applications and the one-stop Homeowner's Center at 1100 Fourth Street, SW. HPO Preservation Specialist and Capitol Hill resident Amanda Molson works with owners of historic properties who are planning repairs, in-kind replacements, or alterations. She will explain how the historic preservation guidelines and standards apply to intended changes.

This event is open to the public. Attendees are encouraged to bring photos to help illustrate their questions. A brief CHRS membership meeting will be held at 6:45 pm, preceding the forum. ★

Permits 101: What You Need to Know

February 27, 2013
7-8:30 pm; doors open at 6:30 pm

Maury Elementary School
1250 Constitution Avenue, NE

CHRS Accepting Nominations for 2013-14 Board

Looking to help make Capitol Hill a better place to live, work and play? Consider service on the CHRS Board of Directors. CHRS will hold elections for the 2013-14 Board of Directors in May via postcard ballot. The positions include three At-Large Members for two year terms, as well as the one-year terms for all officers: President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary.

To be considered, to recommend someone, or to find out more about the duties, please contact Paul Cromwell (202-543-7530, paulcromwell@verizon.net) or CHRS (202-543-0425, CapHRS@aol.com). Recommendations will be accepted through Friday, April 5, 2013. Nominations will be announced at the end of April.

Historic Preservation Briefs

By Shauna Holmes

Historic Preservation Review Board Nomination

On November 30, 2012, Mayor Vincent Gray nominated Charles E. Wilson as a public member of the DC Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB). If confirmed by the City Council, Mr. Wilson will replace former HPRB member Catherine Buell and complete the remainder of her term, which ends July 21, 2015. Ms. Buell served as Chair of HPRB from mid-2010 until late November 2012 when she stepped down to take a position in the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development, where she will oversee the development of Saint Elizabeth's East Campus. Ms. Buell, who became the first woman to chair HPRB, has been replaced as Chair by Gretchen Pfaeher.

Like Ms. Buell, Mr. Wilson is an attorney who lives in Anacostia. Active in local civic affairs, he co-founded the Historic Anacostia Block Association (HABA) and the River East Emerging Leaders, and has served as president of both. He is also an ANC Commissioner in Ward 8. Working with HABA, Mr. Wilson helped facilitate a concerted effort to bring over \$1 million in DC Historic Homeowners Grants to residents of the Anacostia Historic District to improve and rehabilitate their homes' exteriors. The CHRS board voted to join five other historic districts in endorsing a letter to Council Chair Phil Mendelson from the DC Historic Districts Coalition supporting Mr. Wilson's candidacy.

A public hearing on his nomination will be held at noon on February 22 before the Committee of the Whole in Hearing Room 120 of the John A. Wilson Building.

Spingarn High School

Revised DC Department of Transportation (DDOT) plans for the proposed car barn on the Spingarn High School ground are expected to return to HPRB for further review in February.

Last September the Kingman Park Civic Association (KPCA) submitted an application to the HPRB recommending historic landmark designation for Spingarn High School. KPCA expedited the application's filing after DDOT designated the Spingarn campus as the site of a new car barn for the H Street/Benning Road Streetcar Line, probably hoping that historic designation might afford some protection to the school and its grounds.

After studying the application, the DC Historic Preservation Office (HPO) staff recommended that HPRB approve listing Spingarn in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites and forward the nomination to the National Park Service for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, the staff report suggested that the entire four-school "educational campus in its entirety would appropriately be a single landmark or a historic district—and possibly a district in combination with the surrounding African American landmark properties [Langston Terrace Dwellings and Langston Golf Course] and the adjoining Kingman Park neighborhood..."

CHRS testimony given in support of the designation at HPRB's November 29 hearing said, "We agree with staff that Spingarn's significance lies in its eligibility for National Register Criteria A and C: its association with historic events and patterns of growth—i.e., segregated schools [in Washington]

and development of an important African-American neighborhood in the city—and its architectural significance embodying distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style and building type." When it was finished, Spingarn completed a campus of segregated schools that was begun in the 1930s. CHRS testimony went on to say Spingarn "still embodies and expresses its Colonial Revival and Classical Revival style, and as many historic high schools do, it stands impressively atop its green south campus, which sweeps down to Benning Road....CHRS is very concerned about a pending proposal that would compromise the integrity of Spingarn's setting."

Numerous others testified in favor of the nomination, including KPCA representatives, ANC Commissioners, a Spingarn graduate, and neighborhood residents. An interesting bit of the school's history was mentioned by Frazer Walton, KPCA president, who said Thurgood Marshall sent a note that was read at Spingarn's dedication expressing regret that he couldn't attend because he was arguing the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* case before the Supreme Court.

The HPRB voted unanimously to designate Spingarn a historic landmark, enter it in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites, and forward the nomination for listing in the National Register. The hearing room, which was packed with supporters, broke out in applause, hugs, and handshakes. Prior to their vote, individual HPRB members declared the event an occasion for celebrating DC history, noted that the huge turnout was a testament to the power of community, and recommended making use of the momentum and support to nominate the entire educational campus. ★

56th Annual House and Garden Tour

Saturday, May 11, 5–8 pm and Sunday, May 12, 1–5 pm

Mark your calendar for this year's House and Garden Tour, which will concentrate on the western part of Capitol Hill, bounded by Pennsylvania Avenue and the Southeast Freeway between South Capitol and Sixth Street, SE.

Tour tickets are \$25 in advance (\$20 for CHRS members until April 21) and \$30 the weekend of the tour. They may be purchased online at www.chrs.org and at select venues around the Hill (locations available on the CHRS website). CHRS also will have a booth at Eastern Market during

weekends April 20–21, April 27–28, May 4–5, as well as Tour weekend.

It takes hundreds of volunteers to make this popular annual event a success. If you would like to serve as a house docent on Tour weekend, or to assist in another way, please contact Gloria Junge at CHRS (202-543-0425, CapHRS@aol.com). Nominations for houses to be included in the tour can be sent to Michelle Carroll (202-544-5057, pilliodmp@aol.com) or Steve Hagedorn (202-841-1380, shagedorn@cbmove.com). ★



Two houses that will be included in this year's Tour.

Reserve Now for February 5 Overbeck Lecture: "Hollywood on the Potomac"

On Tuesday evening, February 5, *Hill Rag* film critic Mike Canning will deliver an Overbeck History Lecture based on his new book, *Hollywood on the Potomac: How the Movies View Washington, DC*.

Canning has long been fascinated by the ways that moviemakers have depicted our nation's capital. With clips from films spanning more than half a century, he'll present amusing examples of mangled geography and cultural tone-deafness, along with some notable cases where the filmmakers actually got it right.

Canning's book, which grew out of an Overbeck lecture he delivered in 2007, examines more than fifty motion pictures of the Sound Era, from *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* to *J. Edgar*, and includes essays on politics and film and on the challenges of location shooting in Washington. His February 5 lecture will be new and not a repetition of the 2007 presentation.

A longtime Capitol Hill resident, Canning worked for 28 years as a press and cultural officer for the U.S. Information Agency both in Washington and overseas, and began writing movie reviews for *The Rag* upon his retirement from the Foreign Service in 1993. Since 1999 he has also served as a programmer and commentator for the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop's classic films series. In addition, he has published a number of articles on the treatment of Washington and the U.S. Congress in American feature films.

The lecture will be held at 7:30 pm Tuesday, February 5, at the Naval Lodge Hall at 330 Pennsylvania Ave., SE and will conclude with a book signing. As usual, admission is free but a reservation is required due to limited seating. Please e-mail OverbeckLecture@CapitolHillHistory.org and indicate how many seats you will need.

375 apartments. Across the street from both of these projects, the Third & H Liquor Store is closed and a boutique office condominium is being proposed by Capital City Real Estate. Soon, these projects will be just one of the stops linked by the H Street/ Benning Road Streetcar between Union Station and Minnesota Ave.

Heritage Foundation

A few blocks south and within the Capitol Hill Historic District, the Heritage Foundation wants to increase its presence in the neighborhood. Heritage purchased additional property in the 400 block of Third Street, NE, and has already demolished a non-contributing church structure. They propose to remove another non-contributing, small apartment building, and envision an underground parking structure with six rowhouses along Third Street. Heritage also plans to convert the former New Haven Apartment building at Third & Massachusetts back to residential use for its intern program, freeing up space in the building at former Capitol Tower Apartments at 208 Massachusetts for additional office space. The project has many positive aspects, particularly the re-introduction of rowhouse structures on residential Third Street, and concentrating retail and office activity in the 200 block of Massachusetts. The concept plan has been very well received.

Stuart-Hobson School

The large number of families moving to the area, especially those with young children, has increased the demand for education facilities. Well on its way, the Museum Magnet and Arts Integration Program will be housed within an addition to the renovated Stuart-Hobson School. CHRS strongly supports the overall concept of the program

including the massing and footprint of the proposed addition. When the cost of earthquake-related repairs to the obsolete smokestack threatened to add considerable cost to the renovations, the CHRS Historic Preservation Committee felt those funds would be better spent elsewhere and endorsed the demolition of this architectural element. In addition, the District's Historic Preservation Committee met with the architect several times in an effort to guide the addition toward a more appropriate design statement. Other recent education/ charter school programs in the immediate area include the Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan and School Within A School at Logan Annex.

Union Station

The main anchor for this part of Capitol Hill is, of course, Union Station. Beyond the major vehicular and pedestrian improvements nearing completion at Columbus Circle, changes—even monumental changes—are proposed for Union Station. Expansion of the retail opportunities are under serious consideration, and—if approved—may eliminate the Center Café, and introduce escalators from the Main Hall to the lower level. Even if approved, that project must await completion of the earthquake-related repairs to the vaulted ceiling. While it's regrettable that the scaffolding will likely be in place for more than another year, Union Station Redevelopment Corporation is taking the opportunity to re-gild, repair, and repaint the coffered barrel vault. In recent months, CHRS has participated in an effort led by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to ensure that the historic context of Union Station is not over-looked by efforts to expand retail, and in particular, to assure that

the historic fabric is well integrated into the truly monumental project envisioned by Akridge Real Estate and Amtrak. The Union Station air rights project anticipates greatly expanded rail service with a new passenger terminal below the tracks, local and long distance bus facilities, and several million square feet of office, residential, and retail above the tracks. As part of that project, the H Street Overpass would be re-built, allowing the H Street Streetcar to continue west beyond Union Station and into downtown DC.

Pressures on the Rowhouse Neighborhood

Each of these projects promises to bring even more vitality—office, retail, and residential, as well as expanded education and transportation opportunities—to the Swampoodle section of the Capitol Hill Historic District. However, it is also important to remember that—for now—much of the area remains an intact rowhouse neighborhood. The neighborhood south of F Street already benefits from the protections afforded by historic district designation. Residents should consider the difference in the scale and design of projects proposed within the historic district, versus those not within the historic district. As these large projects become a reality they promise to further transform the neighborhood. Most of the benefits are positive, but as the desirability of the neighborhood increases there will also be increased pressure on the rowhouse neighborhood. The blocks north of F Street are not yet protected, and ultimately it will be up to the residents to weigh the advantages and benefits of expanding the Capitol Hill Historic District as the best hope to retain the historic fabric of the neighborhood. ★

Preservation Easements Listed on CHRS Website

By Paul Cromwell

CHRS now has a list by address of those properties in the eastern part of the city, including Capitol Hill, that have associated Preservation Easements.

According to the National Park Service, "A historic preservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement, typically in the form of a deed, which permanently protects a significant historic property. Since it is a perpetual easement, an owner is assured that the property's historic character will be preserved." For further information please consult <http://1.usa.gov/10r1tNL>.

Preservation easements are held by qualified organizations. Four such organizations hold preservation easements for properties in the eastern part of the city. Those organizations periodically submit lists of preservation easements to the District government, which cannot independently guarantee the accuracy of the data.

The most recent list, containing 455 addresses, is on CHRS' website at www.chrs.org. The list is divided between the northeast and southeast sections of the city and then sorted by street and address. The qualified organization holding the easement is listed for each property. Most, but not all, preservation easements address the facades of the listed structures. However, some easements encompass the entire exterior of the building (front, side, back, roof, and front yards and backyards). Many owners wrongly assume that only the front of the building is subject to review by their easement holder, and it's important for them to know the extent of their easements. Property owners should be sure to check on that with their easement holder before contemplating any work.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation provides additional information on the Trust web page: <http://bit.ly/SyjdXV>.

The Trust notes that "Owners of historic properties devote considerable time, effort, and expense to restoring and maintaining the architectural details and historic character of their properties. Preservation-minded owners often worry that their properties will not be properly protected and maintained in the future by subsequent owners. Likewise, preservation organizations have a strong interest in ensuring the long term protection of the many thousands of historic properties that remain in active private use, whether a nationally-significant landmark, a rural village, a cultural landscape, or farmland.

"For property owners looking to *permanently* protect their historic properties, one of the most effective legal tools available is the **preservation easement**—a private legal interest conveyed by a property owner to a preservation organization or to a government entity. The decision to donate a preservation easement is almost always voluntary, but, once made, it binds both the current owner *and future owners* to protect the historic character of the property subject to the easement. Preservation easements have been used to protect a wide range of historic properties across the country—from New England Cape Cod cottages to Southwestern archaeological sites, and from Kentucky horse farms to mid-twentieth century Modernist houses in California. While some easements are for a period of years, in most instances easements are created as permanent restrictions.

"Preservation easements have become an important component of state and federal policy to encourage public participation in the preservation

of America's historic resources. Indeed, their use is specifically encouraged by an important economic incentive: property owners who donate qualified preservation easements to qualified easement-holding organizations may be eligible for a charitable contribution deduction from their federal income taxes for the value of the historic preservation easement—provided that the contribution meets the standards of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS)."★

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

Mark Your Calendar!

FEBRUARY

4 Monday

CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Shauna Holmes, 546-5211.

5 Tuesday, 7:30 pm

Overbeck Lecture: "Hollywood on the Potomac" with film critic Mike Canning. Naval Lodge Hall, 330 Pennsylvania Avenue SE. Admission is free, but reservations required. E-mail OverbeckLecture@CapitolHillHistory.org and indicate number of tickets needed.

14 Thursday, 7:30 pm

CHRS Zoning Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Gary Peterson, 547-7969.

19 Tuesday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor. Details: Janet Quigley, 543-0425.

23 Saturday, 1:30 pm

Were you there? Remembering the 1963 March on Washington. Lutheran Church of the Reformation, 212 East Capitol Street NE.

27 Wednesday, 7:00 pm

Community Forum, Maury Elementary School, 1250 Constitution Avenue, NE. Permits 101: What You Need to Know," a primer on the District's residential permitting process. Doors open at 6:30 pm; brief membership meeting at 6:45 pm.

MARCH

4 Monday

CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Shauna Holmes, 546-5211.

14 Thursday, 7:30 pm

CHRS Zoning Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Gary Peterson, 547-7969.

19 Tuesday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor. Details: Janet Quigley, 543-0425.

20 Wednesday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Preservation Café, Ebenezers Coffee House, 2nd and F Streets, NE, downstairs; 6:30–7:15 pm. Topic to be announced. Details: Elizabeth Nelson, 543-3512.