



NEWS

www.chrs.org

April 2014

2014 Capitol Hill House and Garden Tour

By Paul Cromwell

The annual CHRS House and Garden Tour is a beloved Mother’s Day tradition. This year, the 57th Annual Tour will be held on May 10 and 11. The Tour is a walkable mile and quarter between Third and Ninth Streets and Constitution Avenue south to Independence Avenue.

While much of historic Capitol Hill is Victorian, this Tour includes four frame houses from the Civil War era and the decade following. One combines two frame houses with later additions, and a stunning rear garden. A second saw early duty as both a

residence and a grocery store. Two others have been recently renovated, one with a carriage house and the other on a level known in the nineteenth century as “Washington Terrace.”

Many of the homes include fine displays of antiques, both American and French, dating to the eighteenth century, and art ranging from local modern designers to paintings and graphics from around the world. The gardens include an unusually large koi pond, which is fully stocked, and a stunning rear garden developed by the owner, who is a horticulturist by training.

There also will be the unusual. For nearly half a century a hostel has occupied a large building originally constructed as a real estate office on the ground floor with family quarters above. Perhaps the living quarters will remind you of trips long past—or that recent trip to the Continent on a modest budget.

Then there is a beautifully constructed circa 1870 home that presents multiple mysteries: who constructed the home? How were the funds for construction obtained? How did the owner die? Do the ghosts and their appearances as orbs represent a return of the original owner? Perhaps we will have answers for some (but not all) of these questions. Please join us for the Tour!

Ticket pricing remains the same: CHRS Members may purchase up to four tickets for \$20 each if ordered by April 18. After that, the standard ticket prices apply: \$25 per ticket purchased in advance and \$30 on Tour weekend. Tickets may be purchased online at www.CHRS.org, at eight ticket outlets: Appalachian Spring at Union Station; Prudential PenFed; Coldwell-Banker; Groovy DC, homebody; Riverby Books; Hill’s Kitchen and the Hill Center at the Old Naval Hospital. Tickets also will be sold outside at Eastern Market on weekends beginning April 19. ✧

IMAGE COURTESY JUDITH MAY



The William Penn House at 515 East Capitol Street is an unusual stop on this year’s House and Garden Tour.

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President's Column: Winds of Change

By Janet Quigley

Welcome New CHRS Office Manager

We are pleased to announce that Mr. Carl Spier will be CHRS's new Office Manager. Carl is a longtime CHRS member with extensive experience in management, retail (bookstores), real estate and administration. Most important for our members, he brings a commitment to customer service that continues the high standard of support for which Ms. Gloria Junge, our outgoing manager, is well known.

For the last five years Gloria has done a remarkable, unflagging job of keeping CHRS's many activities on course. We owe her a huge debt of gratitude, and she will be sincerely missed. She has promised to assist Carl with the transition as she prepares for new challenges.

Find the Perfect Volunteer Job

... At the Hill Center's annual volunteer fair on May 10. "Volunteer Capitol Hill" will feature more than 30 nonprofit organizations that serve the Hill who are seeking those all-important helpers who give our community its can-do reputation. Whether your goal is to meet new friends, develop a new skill and/or help a good cause, there is sure to be an activity that appeals at this event. CHRS will be there recruiting writers, researchers, event staff and last-minute House Tour volunteers. Drop by between 10 am and 2 pm for your pick of opportunities.

Height Act Post Script

On March 12, Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA) gained committee approval for

a bill that would change the Height of Buildings Act to allow occupied penthouse apartments. He first expressed interest in the change in 2012, and, after exhaustive study, it was supported by the National Capital Planning Commission. The DC Office of Planning and Mayor Gray supported more wide ranging changes last August.

A *Washington Post* editorial March 23 bemoaned the modest scope of the bill, asserting that increased supply of square footage would decrease housing prices, making it more affordable to live here. However, the City's economic study last summer found that only luxury housing prices would

Continued on page 4

Southeast Freeway Onramp Updates

By Beth Purcell

The Community Communications Committee for the 11th Street Bridge project met on March 10, 2014. The project is over 90% complete, on time and on budget. In the short term, there will be more convenience and also more inconvenience:

- The temporary entrance ramp to Southeast Freeway (I-695) westbound at 11th Street will be closed June 17 to August 27, 2014. The reason: building a bridge to the exit on 8th Street (under the Marine Barracks). Many drivers have come to appreciate this new entrance to the freeway. During the summer, everyone will have to resume using the 3rd Street ramp (which will be improved to make it safer).
- An exit from the Southeast Freeway eastbound at 11th Street will open in early summer. This will allow drivers to avoid the exit at 6th Street, if they wish, and exit at 11th Street instead.
- In the future, 11th Street will have four lanes, including a left-turn lane (northbound) for the freeway entrance ramp. Eleventh Street will be closed between K Street and M Street on several weekends, in order to demolish part of the old bridge.
- A new entrance ramp at 8th Street onto the freeway eastbound will open in April 2014 (i.e., the entrance being built on 8th Street under the freeway between the murals). There will be a left-turn lane on 8th Street southbound, with a traffic light controlling the entrance ramp.
- The old 8th Street eastbound ramp (now closed) might be reused to provide additional parking.
- By the end of 2014, DDOT plans to finish the "Southeast Boulevard" to 12th Street, then drop the road down to the current level at 13th Street, and eastward, and reconnect to Barney Circle. If the "Southeast Boulevard" is built east of 13th Street (a project opposed by CHRS and ANC6B), then the road level of the boulevard eastbound would be elevated. ✪

Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

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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 55 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.

Historic Preservation Briefs

By Beth Purcell

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) considered the following cases on February 27 and March 6, 2014. HPRB is responsible for determining if proposed changes in a building are consistent with the DC preservation act. A "concept review" is a preliminary examination of the building owner's plan to alter the building, and if approved, the applicant will return to the Board for a final review. In these reports, "staff" refers to the staff of the Historic Preservation Office, which serves as the staff of the HPRB.

719 12th Street, SE, HPA 13-630, concept/ three-story rear addition. HPRB adopted the staff report and approved the concept with the following conditions: the applicant provide a clear record of structural work completed to stabilize the building and a report on what remains to be completed to address structural and environmental concerns; the applicant share plans and consult adjacent neighbors and the ANC about the project. The Board asked the applicant to update the drawings to correct discrepancies and include missing dimensions; provide additional information on egress and access to the basement areaways; and determine the location of the meters and HVAC equipment. The Board recommended reducing the height of the addition, further recess the front deck, and pull the rear balconies in from the side of the building. The Board requested the applicant return to the Board with the requested information and updated plans.

419 8th Street, SE, HPA 14-134, concept/ façade alteration and second-floor addition. (Currently housing the Tandoor Grill on Barracks Row, a building built after 1945, and thus a "noncontributing building").

The Board adopted the staff report and found the current proposal consistent with the purposes of the preservation act with the condition the applicant continue to work with staff on the storefront window details; the choice of material for the façade; the location and design for the second floor guardrail; and the party wall details. The Board requested the applicant resubmit the updated plans to the Board for review.

1329 Constitution Avenue, NE, HPA 14-043, concept/ rear three-story addition. The Board denied the concept and found it inconsistent with the purposes of the preservation act because of the amount of demolition.

651 E Street, SE, HPA 14-042, revised concept/ two-story rear addition. The Board found the project consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and delegated final approval to staff with the condition the applicant work with staff to refine the addition's fenestration and cornice.

614 A Street, SE, HPA 14-165, concept/ rear two-story addition, approved on the Board's consent calendar. ★

Northeast Branch Library Reopened

By Elizabeth Nelson and Susan Burgerman

After being closed for a lengthy renovation, the Northeast Branch Library has finally reopened and is again serving the community. The formal ribbon cutting on Monday, February 3, was followed by a reopening party on Saturday, February 8. CHRS was invited to staff an information booth at the celebration. We shared copies of this newsletter, distributed House and Garden Tour flyers and entertained our younger visitors with beads to string and temporary tattoos. The party was very well attended and we were thrilled to talk at length with those who stopped by our booth.

One highlight was meeting with two librarians from the Washingtoniana section of the DC Public Library, Russell Martin and Michele Casto. They told us about "Know Your Neighborhood," an ongoing series of programs exploring

the history of DC's neighborhoods. The series represents a collaboration between the Washingtoniana Division of DC Public Library and the neighborhood branches. Each season a different branch will host a series of lectures, workshops, panels and walking tours that highlight the communities it serves. In March and April, the Northeast Branch library was highlighted with three presentations: "Researching Your House History," "From Pleasure Gardens to Streetcars: A Photographic History of H Street NE" and "The Washington Coliseum: The Forgotten Landmark." All of these events have been posted on our website calendar. Additional programming is expected in May but the schedule has not been published at the time of writing. Visit www.dclibrary.org/knowyourneighborhood for more information.

Another treat was seeing the newly renovated interior. Of special note are the meeting spaces, particularly the large meeting room on the lower level; the Society has already taken advantage of this space by hosting the March Membership meeting there. Other interior highlights include restoration of original woodwork, the reintroduction of historically appropriate paint colors and improved lighting. The exterior renovation plans were all reviewed to ensure they were compliant with the Historic District regulations.

The Northeast Branch Library is located at 330 7th Street, NE. Please visit www.dclibrary.org/northeast for hours of operation, events and more. ★

President's Column, *continued from page 2*

benefit from an increase in supply. In November, Post columnist Jonetta Rose Barras termed the claim that a height limit increase would aid affordable housing "ridiculous." Residents in a Post survey strongly supported keeping the height limits, 61% to 37%. CHRS continues to support the height limit.

Thank You Shauna Holmes

Finally, I need to express our utmost appreciation for Shauna Holmes, Chair of CHRS's Historic Preservation Committee, who is stepping down after two rigorous and demanding years as Chair and several more years on the board as Second Vice President and At-Large

member. Beth Purcell has agreed to serve as the next Chair of the Historic Preservation Committee.

Shauna took over as HP Chair in 2012 from Nancy Metzger, who was appointed to the DC Historic Preservation Review Board. On Shauna's watch as Chair the number of residential and institutional projects surged as the economy rebounded, and her committee diligently reviewed each project and provided detailed recommendations valued by DC's Historic Preservation Office. We wish her the best as she begins to enjoy a well-deserved respite, and look forward to her continued involvement in preservation matters and the Society. ★

Thank You CHRS Supporters

We thank the following new members, patrons and sponsors.

NEW MEMBERS

Thomas Alder

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John F. & Thea A. Kreis

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Marilyn Adams

John Franzen

Lou Ivey & Mac Hansbrough

Fred & Virginia Mashack

Undine Nash

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57th Annual
House and Garden Tour
Saturday and Sunday • May 10–11, 2014

Individual Donations and Ticket Order Form

Tax-Deductible Contributions

Benefactors, Patrons, and Sponsors will be listed in the Tour brochure if received by April 15.

- 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 scan and e-mail with full payment by April 18.

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

_____ Additional Tour tickets @ \$25.00 each

Name: _____

Mailing address: _____

E-mail: _____ Phone: _____

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

Card Number: _____ Expiration: _____

Signature: _____ CVV Code: _____

Tickets will be mailed approximately two weeks before the Tour.

CHRS
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Preventative Maintenance in Historic Homes

By Greg Holeyman, AIA, LEED AP

Gary Barnhart, general contractor and owner of GL Barnhart Construction, was the March Preservation Café speaker. A Capitol Hill resident, Mr. Barnhart founded GL Barnhart in 1997 with his father, focusing on home improvement and small commercial renovations. Today, the company focuses on modern renovations, historic restorations and construction work in the Capitol Hill area.

Gary's presentation focused on simple and cost-effective measures to extend the life cycle of a home and its components. Preventative measures were recommended for exterior walls and plumbing systems. Other items discussed included knowing the facts about your house before an emergency, performing regular inspections and preparing a house for the summer and winter seasons.

He noted that for exterior walls, crawlspaces and attic spaces, properly insulating and sealing the interior from the exterior provides the largest return on investment. Examples include weather stripping exterior windows and doors, caulking wall penetrations, sealing around recessed lights and checking dampers to ensure they seal properly.

Preventative maintenance of a residential plumbing system includes draining the water heater empty at least once a year to remove sediment buildup from the tank, checking the flapper in the toilet tank for internal leaks and cleaning out aerators at kitchen and bathroom faucets. Frozen pipes can be avoided by installing good insulation between the exterior walls and pipes and by cutting off supply lines to exterior spigots before winter.

Before an emergency occurs in your house, know the locations of the main water and gas shut-off valves,

clean-outs and electrical distribution panels. A house file/folder should be maintained that includes appliance serial and model numbers, product manuals and any applicable warranties, service history and titles or deeds.

Establishing a regular maintenance and inspection schedule for your home will help save money over time. A cyclical inspection schedule should include checking the sump pump to make sure the discharge line is not obstructed, testing smoke detectors and GFCI and AFCI outlets

and testing the AC overflow shut-off float switch. Areas to routinely clean include gutters and floor drains in outdoor areas to prevent drainage issues and accidental water infiltration into the house.

Seasonal checks include testing the furnace in late summer and checking the AC condensate drain in the fall. Trees should be pruned in the winter to avoid exposing them to fungi.

Always happy to answer any renovation questions, Gary can be reached at (202) 569-8471 or Gary@GLBarnhart.com. ★

April Preservation Café: The Historic Waterfront of Washington, DC

Many Washingtonians know this city was built on and around rivers. John R. Wennersten will delve deeper into the multi-faceted history of the Washington waterfront when he discusses his new book, *The Historic Waterfront of Washington, DC*, at our upcoming Preservation Café. Wennersten is Emeritus Professor of American History at the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore. His other books on environmental history include *The Oyster Wars of Chesapeake Bay*, *Chesapeake Bay: An Environmental Biography*, *Global Thirst: Water and Society in the 21st Century* and *Anacostia: The Death and Birth of An American River*. He is also the co-author with Robert Pohl of *Abraham Lincoln and the End of Slavery in the District of Columbia*, which was recently published by Friends of the Southeast Public Library.

"Over the years the Washington waterfront has had a curious evolution," Wennersten argues. "Few people realize how essential the waterfront has been to the unfolding of the monumental city in the present era."

Wennersten is a former Overbeck lecturer and speaks frequently on environmental history at the Anacostia Community Museum and the National Building Museum. He currently serves as Vice-President of the Friends of the Southeast Public Library and is on the Board of Directors of the Anacostia Watershed Society. He and his wife Ruth Ellen live on Capitol Hill.

Wednesday, April 16, 6:30–7:15 pm, Ebenezers Coffee House (downstairs), 2nd and F Street, NE. Handicapped-accessible; no reservations required. Contact Elizabeth Nelson, (202) 543-3512 with questions. Copies of Wennersten's book will be available for purchase.

Single-story Commercial Buildings in Hill East: "Taxpayers" on 15th Street, SE

By Beth Purcell

In 1924, Preston E. Wire (c. 1903–1952) constructed a small cluster of single-story brick stores at 243–249 15th Street, SE, an otherwise residential block in Hill East. Wire was a major real estate developer who built many houses in various neighborhoods around Washington, including Capitol Hill and Brookland. Beginning in 1938, during a time when Washington was still fiercely segregated, Wire built 2,000 units of rental housing for African-Americans. Carver Terrace in Northeast is his best-known project.¹ By comparison, the commercial buildings on 15th Street, SE appear to be one of his smaller ventures.

One-story commercial buildings like these are sometimes called "taxpayers": small buildings that made the property economically productive (and paid the property taxes) until the land was redeveloped. From 1924 until the late 2000s, a variety of tenants occupied these



Photograph of 243–249 15th Street, SE (demolished); 243 appears on the right.

buildings: grocery, bakery, variety store, cleaner, tailor, beauty salon, repair shops. Holy City Mission occupied 247 15th Street circa 1991. The buildings fell into disrepair and were subsequently demolished and replaced by condominiums in 2008. ★

¹ "Preston Wire, D.C. Builder, Dies in Miami," *Washington Post*, 24 Oct. 1952, 28; LaBarbara Bowman, "Split Personality Housing Project," *Washington Post*, 4 Dec. 1978, sec. C, p. 1.

Seeking Nominations for 2014–15 Board

CHRS will hold elections for the 2014–15 Board of Directors by postcard ballot in May. The elections committee (Gary Peterson, Elizabeth Nelson and Beth Purcell) is seeking recommendations of individuals who wish to be considered for positions on next year's CHRS Board of Directors. These positions include President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary for one-year terms, and three At Large Members for two-year terms.

If you wish to be considered, to recommend someone, or to find out more about the duties of each position, please contact Gary Peterson at (202) 547-7969 or pgarylaw@aol.com. Recommendations must include the position for which the person wants to be considered and his or her resume.

Recommendations must be submitted to Gary Peterson by the end of the day on April 10, 2014. Nominations will be announced at the end of April.

Tour Volunteers Needed

Can you spare an hour or two in April or May to help a good cause? CHRS is currently seeking volunteers for:

- House Tour Docents
- Ticket booth at Eastern Market
- Cookie and cupcake bakers
- Bicycle deliveries
- Social media support
- And many others

To be a part of this year's house tour, please contact CHRS at 543-0425 or CapHRS@aol.com.



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

Mark Your Calendar!

APRIL

7 Monday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Beth Purcell, 544-0178.

8 Tuesday, 7:30 pm
Overbeck History Lecture by Stephen Grant on how Henry and Emily Folger brought their mammoth Shakespeare collection to Capitol Hill. At the Naval Lodge Hall, 330 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE. Admission is free but a reservation is required. Contact OverbeckLecture@CapitolHillHistory.org.

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

15 Tuesday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor. Details: Janet Quigley, 543-0425.

16 Wednesday, 6:30–7:15 pm
CHRS Preservation Café: Local author John R. Wennersten will discuss his new book, *The Historic Waterfront of Washington, DC*. Ebenezers Coffee House (downstairs), 2nd and F Streets, NE. Wheelchair accessible; no reservations required.

MAY

5 Monday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Beth Purcell, 544-0178.

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

10 Saturday, 10 am–2 pm
Volunteer Capitol Hill volunteer fair. Signups, information on Hill nonprofits. Details: Ann Goodwin, 499-6448.

17 Saturday, 9–11 am
CHRS Special Boat Tour of the Anacostia River hosted by The Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS). Details: CHRS Office, 543-0425 or CapHRS@aol.com

20 Tuesday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor. Details: Janet Quigley, 543-0425.

21 Wednesday, 6:30–7:15 pm
CHRS Preservation Café: Kim Williams on the Alley Buildings of Capitol Hill. Ebenezers Coffee House (downstairs), 2nd and F Streets, NE. Wheelchair accessible; no reservations required.

57th Annual Capitol Hill House and Garden Tour

Saturday, May 10 • 4–7 pm | Sunday, May 11 • 12–5 pm

More information and tickets available at 543-0425 or www.chrs.org.