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February 2015

CHRS Celebrating 60 Years of Preservation

A Look at Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Early History

By John Muller, Hill Rag

Imagine if East Capitol Street was flanked by monuments and federal buildings instead of small-scale residential and commercial buildings. Imagine if a highway bisected Capitol Hill. Imagine if historic Hill landmarks such as the Sewall-Belmont House had been razed to make room for administrative buildings. All of these proposals and more, which would have permanently altered the streetscape and character of the Hill's neighborhoods, would have been a reality had it not been for the advocacy work of an organized group of citizen-activists.

A history of the neighborhood-based preservationist movement in Washington is filled with spirited successes, destructive losses, leading personalities and numerous associations, societies, and leagues. Over the last sixty years one of the most visible and consequential organizations has been the Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS). Founded in early 1955, CHRS is recognizing its diamond jubilee throughout 2015 with a series of articles telling its story of promoting, preserving, and enhancing the

character of Capitol Hill's historic neighborhoods.

Founding and Early Efforts

In March of 1955, the Stanton Park Citizens' Association celebrated its 35th Anniversary and welcomed a presentation by a group of their neighbors who, six weeks before, had formed the Capitol Hill Restoration Society to "emulate the work done by property owners in Georgetown." From its start, CHRS sought to form alliances and relationships with existing civic groups who shared an interest in the rehabilitation of residential and commercial properties and had an institutional knowledge of the mechanics of local government, which, in DC, means a familiarity with Congress.

Saving the Sewall-Belmont House

During the spring of 1955 a bill before the Senate Public Works Committee called for the razing of the Ava Belmont House at 144 B Street NE in order to construct a new Senate office building. In response, Richard H. Stringfellow, president of the nascent Capitol Hill Restoration Society, sent

CHRS is proud to celebrate its 60th anniversary with three special articles this month. Two articles, first published in the January issue of the *Hill Rag*, highlight some of CHRS's victories over the years as well as its place within the Hill's long history of community activism. In a third article, longtime resident Gerry Dunphy recalls the early days of his involvement with CHRS and life on the Hill in the early '60s.

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President's Column: Is It American To Care About Our Neighbors?

By Lisa Dale Jones

A couple of months ago I attended one of three meetings CHRS held on the Hill to share historical information about the neighborhoods outside the historic district. In sharing the historical research, our goal was to provide information to residents who might want it for walking tours, for school projects, or possibly starting the process of applying for historic district status.

To put it mildly, the discussion was lively, with an unusually large percentage of the crowd appearing to be antagonistic to historic preservation. One of the comments I heard was along the lines of, "This is the United States of America, and no one should be able to tell me, a US citizen, what I can do with my house." I've recently heard variations on that theme in discussions surrounding ways to limit "pop ups" in row house neighborhoods. This is the United States of America, gosh darn it, and I can do whatever I want!

That attitude about one's home might be valid in rural areas, with lots of land around each house and trees to block the view. It certainly hasn't been kind to many suburbs, with modest neighborhoods seeing a proliferation of "McMansions." But it really has

no place in a densely populated city, especially in a neighborhood of attached row houses.

City living by necessity is an exercise in compromise and living well with others. Yes, we give up the privileges of large acreage, low costs, peace and quiet, and easy parking but in return we reap innumerable gains. We have cultural institutions, great restaurants, the stimulation of many universities, the ability to walk and bike or take public transportation, a lively mix of cultures, beautiful old architecture and a sense of identity and place. But an overarching part of living in a city is that we have to interact well with many different types of people—including our neighbors.

When we live in a city we give up our ability to act as an "I"-land, especially where real estate is concerned. Most of what we do to the exterior of our homes affects someone else. A rear addition may block light to the house next door. A roof addition may block a neighbor's solar panels and cast a shadow over their back yard. An upper deck may invade a neighbor's privacy. Removing a tree may expose a neighbor's shade garden

to too much sun. Adding a pop up may put too much weight on a neighbor's foundation. Here in DC, paving a front garden with non-permeable concrete may add water to overflowing sewer pipes in heavy rainstorms, continuing to pollute the Anacostia River. It's all connected.

I like to think that most people want to be good neighbors, and that if they're going to do something to the exterior of their home they will discuss it with those who might be affected. But I know it doesn't always happen. That's why I'm grateful to live in the Capitol Hill historic district. It doesn't prevent people from doing work on their homes. But one of the steps involves providing letters of support from neighbors. And that means talking to them and discussing how improvements may be good for everyone, not just one homeowner.

City dwellers are just as American as rural dwellers—and our numbers are growing. We need to remember that caring about our neighbors is a number one American value! ★

Join/Renew at Current Rates until March 15

Due to rising costs, CHRS will be implementing a modest membership rate increase, effective March 15, 2015. Starting March 15, the cost of a Single membership will go from \$25 to \$35 per year. A Dual (formerly Household) membership will go from \$45 to \$55 per year. The Single Membership is eligible for a \$5 discount on one House Tour ticket; a dual membership will be entitled to purchase two discounted House Tour tickets. All members will continue to receive our newsletter and Historic District guidelines. Renew or join today at <http://chrs.org/join-chrs/> or by calling the CHRS office.

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ABOUT CHRS

Capitol Hill is a special place. We promote, preserve, and enhance the character of our historic neighborhoods.

Since its founding in 1954, CHRS has worked continuously to make Capitol Hill the desirable location it has now become. Due to CHRS's efforts, Capitol Hill won designation as a historic district in 1976. Today, that legacy of standing up for the community continues with our work in planning, zoning, historic preservation, and public safety.

CHRS is a volunteer organization, made up of Hill residents who love their historic neighborhoods and want to ensure that the unique character of the Hill is around for future generations. Come join us!

To learn more or join, please visit:
www.CHRS.org

CHRS Zoning Briefs

By Gary Petersen

The CHRS Zoning Committee considered these cases at its January 8 meeting.

18872, 510 Independence Avenue, SE. The owner has changed to original proposal and has obtained neighborhood approval. The new addition will go from 68% lot occupancy to 76% lot occupancy because they are filling part of an open court. The proposed 2d and 3d floor additions have been pulled back to nearly line up with the backs of adjacent houses. The committee voted to take no position.

18890, 646–654 H Street, NE. This property is a 7,000 square foot parcel located on the NW corner of 7th and H Street, NE. The owner proposes to build a 6 story building with two floors of retail and 4 floors of residential (26 units). He needs variance relieve from the retail parking requirements (8 required, providing 5), residential parking (9 required, 0 provided), compact spaces, and loading berth requirements. The committee voted to oppose the application.

18908, 1401 A Street, SE. The owner proposes to widen by 3 feet an unusable garage that is attached to the house. The property is on the corner of 14th and A Street with the entrance to the home on A Street and the entrance to the attached garage on 14th Street. The owner proposes to enlarge the open porch on the roof of the garage and the sleeping porch above that by 3 feet to make everything line up. This requires a variance for lot occupancy. Adjacent neighbors support the application. The Committee voted to support the variance.

18914, 240 9th Street, NE. The applicant wants a variance to increase the height of his garage to 18 feet

and construct an “artist’s studio” with full bath on the second floor. The Committee voted to oppose the variance.

18938, 325 5th Street, SE. This case was continued at the applicant’s request.

18939, 915 C Street, NE. This case involves the typical request to make an addition to a non-conforming structure that will increase the lot occupancy from 63.7% to 70%. The addition will be setback from the rear of the adjacent properties and the neighbors approve the change.

18915, 1330–1336 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE. This case involves the La Lomita property. The applicant proposes to demolish the property and to build a 4 story building with a new La Lomita on the first floor and 11 units in the 2nd to 4th floors. The applicant needs a variance from lot occupancy and parking since he proposes 90% lot occupancy and no parking. The Committee voted to support the project so long as there are no RPP allowed for this building.

18918, 940 14th Street, SE. The property owner proposes to more than double the size of this front porch house by making a three story 32x16.7 foot rear addition to an existing two story 30x16.7 foot row house. Needless to say to committee voted to oppose the special exception to increase the lot occupancy from 48% to 70%. The addition will grossly overshadow the adjacent properties.

18920, 750 9th Street, SE. This is another artist’s studio request for a variance to construct a two story garage. The committee voted to oppose the application.

The next meeting will be February 12. ★

CHRS Supports Zoning Rule Limiting Pop-Ups

By Beth Purcell

The CHRS Zoning Committee submitted comments supporting the text amendment to limit pop-ups. CHRS members Beth Purcell and Elizabeth Nelson attended the Zoning Commission hearing, and testified that pop-ups should be discouraged, especially in the areas just outside the boundaries of the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Beth Purcell testified that in this part of Capitol Hill, pop-ups are not creating affordable family housing – they are destroying it. The existing row houses are modest and may be a “tight fit” but it is possible to raise a family in them. They may not be cheap but they are relatively affordable. When they are expanded to include additional stories, their price increases dramatically, putting them out of reach of most families. In many cases, the additional stories are leveraged to create multiple housing units, none of which are large enough to accommodate a family and yet each of which is priced similarly to the original house. They are suited to the needs of well-to-do singles or couples but not families with children. An example is 1701 Independence Avenue, SE, a rowhouse sharing a hip roof with the adjacent house. Last year it was assessed at \$487,460. Later, it was purchased and greatly enlarged, the hip roof was split, and this now-oversize house is for sale for \$1.555 million. The “after” photographs speak for themselves.

In many areas of the city, irregular rooflines are not unusual. However, this is not the case in much of the Capitol Hill area, just outside the boundaries of the Capitol Hill Historic District. In Hill East, for example, blocks of modest homes were constructed as a single continuous row with well-considered

variations among them and individual units creating a harmonious whole. The charm of the streetscape is dependent on the uniformity. “Pop-ups” on these blocks are jarring and detract from the sense of scale. They also adversely affect the light and air of their neighbors. Where yards and homes are typically small, it’s discomfiting to have a large structure looming next door.

Elizabeth Nelson testified that for 30 years she has lived in her home, just off Lincoln Park in the last block of the Capitol Hill Historic District: “At first, rampant drug trafficking was the biggest threat to the livability and family-friendly feel of the neighborhood. Now, it’s the loss of suitable family housing and the visual blight of the pop ups. My neighbors fought hard to reduce crime and improve the schools and have been very gratified to see the influx of young families. The homes may be smallish and not as inexpensive as they once were, but they are still manageable for many. But now developers are moving in and ‘popping up’ the modest family homes, turning them into either much larger and extremely expensive homes—out of the reach of even well-to-do families—or into a series of very small units, unsuitable for families and often as expensive as the original house. I worry that the foundations won’t support the increased height and will fail, dragging their neighbors’ homes down with them. I fondly and sadly remember the way the neighborhood looked when I first moved in—a bit dilapidated perhaps, but full of charm and a delight to the eye, built on a human scale, reflecting



IMAGES COURTESY BETH PURCELL



Pop-up at 1701 Independence Avenue, SE.

the pride and craftsmanship of the original builders and radiating the warmth of the generations who have lived in them. Now the visual landscape is interrupted by outrageously ugly pop-ups that reflect only the love of money and a complete disdain for design and responsible construction techniques. Small yards and solar panels are shaded by towering additions whose message is clear ‘my wishes are more important than the comfort of my neighbors.’ I thank my lucky stars every day that my home is within the Historic District but others are not so fortunate. This text amendment would go a long way toward offering my friends and

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Historic Preservation Briefs

by Beth Purcell

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB or the Board) considered the following cases on December 18, 2014. HPRB is responsible for determining if proposed changes to a building are consistent with the DC Preservation Act. A “concept review” is a preliminary determination of a building owner’s plan to alter the building, and if the concept is approved, the owner will return to the HPRB for a final review. In these reports, “staff” refers to the staff of the Historic Preservation Office (HPO), which serves as the staff of the HPRB.

429 12th Street, SE Rear, HPA 14-624, concept/second-story addition to one-story garage. At the hearing on this case on October 23, 2014, the Board found the concept generally compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District but with the conditions that the applicants study preserving more of the existing masonry walls, reducing the extent of new construction, and further distinguishing the original one-story building from the addition. After that hearing, the applicants revised their plans to retain a portion of the brick wall on the north elevation, and emphasized the new construction by recessing the walls on the east and south elevations. CHRS supported the project. At the December 18,

2014 hearing, the Board found the concept compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District and directed the applicants to work with staff to simplify the detailing, and study pulling back the northwest railing.

1013–1015 E Street, SE, HPA 14-720 and 14-721, concept/alterations and rear additions. This was a complex project. It involved a request to consolidate (subdivide) two adjacent lots in a C-2-A zone, create 11 housing units, add basement apartments, basement entrances, and build a two-story “carriage house” (30 x 39 feet) near the alley (spanning the existing lot lines). Each lot has a 19th century house.

When asked by the HPRB, the owner could point to no specific reason for the subdivision request. The new carriage house would dwarf the other nearby alley buildings. One HPRB member referred to the project as a “land grab”—to see how many housing units could be crammed into the lots. The HPRB described how someone living in an apartment in the carriage house would walk to the apartment from E Street: He would need to walk down the new basement steps in the front of 1013 or 1015, walk through the tunnel underneath the houses, climb up stairs into the back yard, and then climb up more stairs to reach an apartment in the carriage house at the rear of

the lot. This convoluted circulation pattern, plus the large volume of new construction relative to the size of the original houses showed that the project is not compatible with the historic district.

CHRS’s concerns about the large size of the carriage house and not setting a precedent if the subdivision was approved, were cited by one of the HPRB members. CHRS also told the HPRB that neighbors opposed the project. The Board found the concept and subdivision (lot combination) to be incompatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District. HPRB indicated that an appropriate project for 1013 and 1015 E Street would be additions to the rear of both houses, and true accessory (small scale) buildings at the rear of the lot.

The following cases, which CHRS also reviewed, appeared on the HPRB consent calendar:

610 A Street, NE, 14-632, concept/rear addition. The applicant worked with the community and CHRS, and as a result, created a design that everyone supported. ★

Interested in learning more about historic district designation?

Contact CHRS at caphrs@aol.com.

Pop-Ups, continued from page 4

neighbors some of the protections by block currently enjoys.

Although, as noted above, I am strongly in support of the text amendment I am concerned that C-1 and C-2-A zones should be treated the same as the R-1 to R-4 zones. Both of

these C Zones are meant to be located in low and medium density residential areas. They abut residential zones and often abut row house neighborhoods such as mine. The proposed regulations will permit too much height and density when compared to

the adjacent neighborhoods and will detract from the quality of life (air, light, quiet) that my neighbors and I currently enjoy.” ★

a letter to the committee requesting that CHRS be given an opportunity to testify during the hearings. Stringfellow asked that the Belmont House, erected in 1800 and rebuilt after being burned by the British in 1814, be excluded to “preserve a tangible place of history for the benefit of the country.” The Belmont House was spared and the reputation of CHRS as an emerging player on the Hill was established.

Preserving East Capitol Street

When a proposed “East Mall Plan” was forwarded by the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) in the late 1950s, CHRS was one of the leading opponents. The proposed legislation called for the creation of a second mall which would flank East Capitol Street from the Capitol to the edge of the Anacostia River.

In March 1959 a special meeting convened by CHRS drew an “overflow crowd” that “grumbled so loudly they often had to be quieted with the president’s gavel.” Despite reassurances from George E. Finley, director of the NCPC, that affected property owners would get market value for their homes on land planned for the construction of new Federal buildings, residents objected. Leveraging their early restoration efforts, residents argued “the planning commission encourages them to improve their homes even though they soon plan to level the sites.” Adding his voice and authority to the opposition was J. George Stewart, the eighth Architect of the Capitol.

After the legislation bounced back and forth within the House Public Buildings subcommittee for nearly two years, the East Mall Plan, a proposed initiative of planners for more than three decades, was finally dropped. Due to the advocacy of members of CHRS and other groups,

staff members of the NCPC proposed that East Capitol Street instead be “made into a tree-lined avenue flanked with quality residential buildings.” But it already was. Ideas for a drastic transformation of East Capitol Street were abandoned.

House and Garden Tours

According to a recent article published in the *Journal of Urban History*, “discussions of neighborhood restoration and preservation” in Washington “were almost entirely focused on Georgetown between the 1920s and 1940s.” However, by the early 1950s the neighborhood restoration movement began its eastward march through the city to the Southeast and Northeast areas of Capitol Hill.

Taking a cue from regular house and garden tours that began in Georgetown in the late 1920s, an emerging trend occurring on the periphery of DC to highlight “historical worthies who had built or inhabited” homes in the suburban and rural counties, and a small-scale effort intended to raise funds for local settlement houses including the former Friendship House, CHRS organized its first house and garden tour in May 1958. The tradition continues today.

“Neither rain nor sleet nor heat of day can deter the true do-it-yourself spirit,” the *Washington Post* proclaimed in a caption showcasing the recently re-painted and re-masoned Victorian home at 11 Fourth Street, NE. The home of attorney John A. Robertie, Jr. was one of 16 houses and St. Mark’s Episcopal Church at 301 A Street SE to be featured on CHRS’ inaugural house tour. As is the practice today, tickets were sold in advance and the day of at the featured homes.

The tours aided in raising the public profile of CHRS and

encouraging the preservation and restoration of the Hill’s residential housing stock. On display were not just the architectural diversity of Hill homes, but the landscape settings and furnishings including collectibles such as antiques, books, and maps.

By 1960, organizers sold more than 700 tickets, “evidence of a burgeoning restoration constituency ... highlight[ing] the fact that urban residential neighborhoods, not just the hamlets of the rural hinterland, were of growing historical interest and cultural prestige to nonspecialists.”

The success of the tours was two-fold: revenue was generated to further the mission and activities of CHRS and potential restorers and remodelers were able to see examples to emulate or gain ideas from.

Participants included both native Hill denizens and national figures living in the neighborhood. Some of those who opened their homes in the early years included members of the House of Representatives, the national press corps, retired military personnel, renowned artists, and local business leaders.

“The rigid conformity that critics of modern America attribute to suburban living does not exist on the Hill,” wrote resident Constance McLaughlin Green, a preeminent Washington historian, in an introduction to the CHRS 1964 tour brochure.

A New Town Look

By the early 1960s the restoration efforts of residents in Capitol Hill, Foggy Bottom, Georgetown and Kalorama were being hailed as epitomizing a “new look,” which gave intown Washington “an orderly new residential character.” According to a September 1961 profile in the

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Capitol Hill's Long Tradition of Community Activism

By Lucinda Prout Janke, Hill Rag

Capitol Hill residents have a long history of activism. From its earliest days as a fledgling neighborhood—more than one actually—in the federal capital established in 1790, its inhabitants have proven activist and even a bit feisty. Settlements began to develop around the Capitol, begun in 1793, the Navy Yard, approved in 1799, and the Marine Square established in 1801, over time growing and merging into the neighborhood now known as Capitol Hill.

Two of the largest property owners, Daniel Carroll and William Prout, along with others in the growing community, contributed much to develop the area and the new city. This included establishing businesses, churches, a volunteer fire company, a bridge by the Navy Yard, a cemetery and a market. They served in various civic capacities including government and numerous other institutions (before the term non-profit was ever invented).

After the British invasion in 1814 the damaged capital was threatened with relocation. Citizens banded together prevent this—and protect their considerable investments. They financed and erected a temporary capitol for Congress at the site of today's Supreme Court, helping to keep the national capital in Washington City.

By the mid-19th century the need for schools throughout the city was pressing. Adolf Cluss, who worked at the Navy Yard, had become the predominant municipal architect of the City, including schools. He developed a prototype with multiple classrooms, in contrast to the one- and two-room schoolhouses then common in the city. The first school he built opened in 1864 on D Street SE between 7th and 8th Streets,

facing Pennsylvania Avenue (later the site of Hine Junior High). This area was chosen because “the citizens of eastern Washington then, as now, were noted for a vigorous assertion of their rights.”

Around the same time, the first purpose-built police station in the city was erected facing Marion Park. Attributed to Cluss, it was demolished and replaced by the current building at 500 E Street, SE. It, too, was threatened with closure and demolition but was saved by citizen action.

A decade later, Cluss designed Eastern Market, moving from its original Navy Yard location to accommodate the growth of the neighborhood to the north. Nearly out of business in the mid-20th century, the market persevered. After a second threat, its devastating 2009 fire, the community sprang into action to support its vendors and ensure the market reopened.

In 1889, resident Albert Carry helped establish the National Capital Bank to provide financial services to the eastern part of the city. Banks at that time had all been located downtown or in Georgetown, but this neighborhood had grown rapidly after the Civil War. His descendants have been involved with NCB ever since, now the District's oldest bank and a supporter of many local efforts.

Perhaps the preeminent 19th century activist was Hill resident Michael Weller, whose home still stands at 408 Seward Square. Born in London, he married into a Hill family and settled here for decades. His business was real estate, specializing in properties east of the Capitol, but he was also very active in civic affairs. He served as president of the East Washington Savings Bank, on the committee celebrating the 1893

centennial of the Capitol, and in 1894 was the only Hill founder of the Columbia Historical Society. He was a respected advocate for the Hill.

In 1890 the East Washington Citizens Association, headed by Weller, helped secure and dedicate a new Pennsylvania Avenue bridge. Since replaced, it is named for arguably the Hill's most famous native son, bandleader John Philip Sousa, whose family members were longtime residents of the Hill. They were not alone; throughout this period many other older families—both black and white—lived here, fostering a strong sense of community.

After World War II, several factors contributed to the decline of urban neighborhoods, including the increasing prevalence of the automobile and subsequent growth of suburbs, as well as the 1954 desegregation of schools. By then some of the houses in this neighborhood had begun to be “restored.” Supreme Court Justice William Douglas purchased a house here in 1949. Early efforts led to some “federalization” of the mostly brick homes, but appreciation of their primarily Victorian features gradually grew.

According to its 1960 publication, the Capitol Hill Southeast Citizens Association celebrated the 50th anniversary of its 1906 founding in 1956, although it appears there was a period of inactivity. Other neighborhood associations were organized around the parks. The pamphlet mentions a newer organization, the Capitol Hill Restoration Society, described as getting off to a slow start but now “very active” and attracting a larger

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Remembering the Early Days of CHRS

By Gerry Dunphy

I joined the Restoration Society in 1962, and remember well what life was like back then....

Jim Hodson was the president when I first went, and Peter Powers became president thereafter. We met in the Presbyterian Church at 4th and E Streets, SE, and it was indeed a lively affair, a sort of town hall meeting. I suspect there were little or no other meetings for people to express their views on matters. Further, we were all bonded together more in those days, less of us, and compressed into a smaller area. "The Hill" originally stopped at the end of Seward Square, had got to 6th Street, SE, maybe 7th Street, but not beyond. Indeed, the 600 block of A Street, SE, was a blighted place, and of course Duddington Place did not exist yet. I remember houses at First and E, SE with all the windows blown out, and houses at First and D costing \$10,000 and no more! So we all had something to do, and we were glad to meet each other at

Restoration Society meetings. It gave us mutual support....tips on what plumbers one used, etc. I suppose the biggest plumbing bill was for a half bath downstairs, but this was not necessary to sell a house, and there was no central A/C envisioned... room units built into the brickwork was a classy idea then...

I saw the article in the Hill Rag about accomplishments of the Society, but I want to add the preservation of Philadelphia Row, i.e., the 100 block of 11th Street, SE. It was slated for demolition for a freeway right through the Hill. It was stopped.

Other things, unfortunately, were not stopped, such as the demolition of three excellent buildings on the 300 block of Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, and Mary's Blue Room, 500 East Capitol Street, NE. Prior to that I remember the demolition of the north side of C Street SE, 200 block, to make way for a new Library of Congress building. What could we do?

The advent of the Historic District stopped unnecessary demolition and the society had a great hand in this, and we must remember Dick Wolf, the great statesman of the Society, who would deserve a statue if anyone got one.

I have good memories of the Society in the '60s; there was a sense of camaraderie and mutual self-help that I appreciated, since I, like my fellow renovators, did have to take a chance on things. If one came to a meeting with a set of drawings for a house, one often got a round of applause, and people like Barbara Held, especially, Rhea Radin and Beau Bogan were great cheerleaders, and Henry Yaffe and Bob Reich stood in the trenches... plus many more who made it all happen, God bless them. ★

Early History, *continued from page 6*

Evening Star, "Not many years ago, more and more people were despairing of cities. Unthinkingly, they were saying that slums were inevitable, that nothing could be done about deterioration." Due to the organizing efforts of the CHRS and similar neighborhood-based groups, "Private individuals had the courage to risk their own funds ... [and] ... Congress had the good sense to recognize that the quality of cities was a national problem."

During this time Washington was increasingly being acknowledged throughout the country as "further advanced along the comeback

road than any other city." In less than a decade, CHRS was able to secure its legitimacy as a leading organization within a sophisticated field of individuals and groups advocating for inner-city preservation and restoration across multiple neighborhoods. In the years to come CHRS would continue to build relationships and its significance through a series of news programs and campaigns while continuing its popular house and garden tours.

Proposed Development of East Capitol Street was thwarted in the early 1960s by neighborhood activists

including members of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society.

For more information on upcoming events and activities of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society, and to read an accompanying article by Hill activist and author Lucinda Prout Janke on the historical tradition of community activism on the Hill, visit the CHRS website. ★

More available on the Hill Rag website:
<http://www.capitalcommunitynews.com/content/chrs-celebrating-60-years-preservation#sthash.eO9kSjBO.dpuf>

Reserve Now for February Overbeck Lecture: Alice Dunnigan, *Alone atop the Hill*

On Tuesday, February 24, author and attorney Carol McCabe Booker will deliver an Overbeck History Lecture based on the newly republished autobiography of Alice Dunnigan, who overcame both race and gender barriers as the first black woman to break into the national press corps in Washington.

Although well-received when she self-published it in 1974, Dunnigan's memoir (originally titled *A Black Woman's Experience: From Schoolhouse to the White House*) is long out of print. Booker was convinced that with her editing and additional annotation, it would be a compelling read for a general audience today, and the University of Georgia Press agreed.

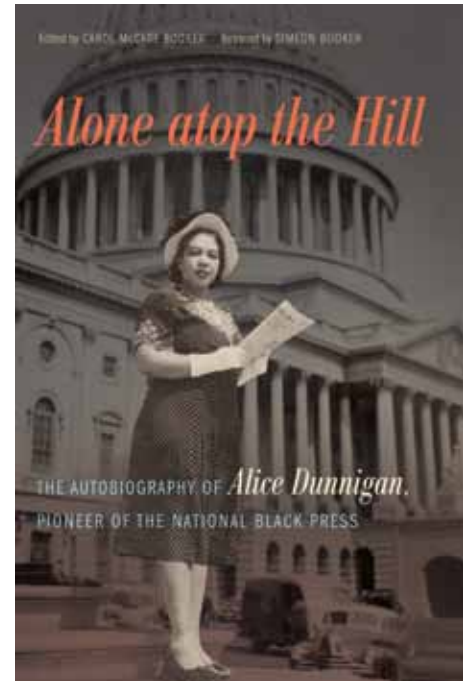
The new, retitled edition, *Alone atop the Hill*, follows Dunnigan from her childhood as the daughter of a sharecropper and laundress in Kentucky to her arrival in World War II Washington, where she worked first as a typist and eventually as a reporter. Ultimately she would become the first black female journalist accredited to the White House and credentialed by the House and Senate Press Galleries and the first to travel with a U.S. president (Harry Truman). She was also the first reporter to question President Eisenhower about civil rights, and provided coverage of

virtually every racial issue before the Congress, the federal courts and the executive branch for more than one hundred black newspapers.

But far more than a recitation of firsts, Booker notes, Dunnigan's memoir provides an uninhibited and unvarnished look at the terrain, the players and the politics in a national capital struggling to make its way through a racial revolution.

Carol Booker is coauthor with her husband, journalist Simeon Booker, of the highly acclaimed history, *Shocking the Conscience: A Reporter's Account of the Civil Rights Movement*, which served as the basis for their excellent, jointly presented Overbeck lecture in April 2013. She has written and edited for Voice of America, freelanced for the Washington Post, Reader's Digest, Ebony, Jet, and Black Stars, and reported from Africa, including the Nigerian warfront, for Westinghouse Broadcasting (Group W).

Her lecture will be held at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, February 24, at the Naval Lodge Hall at 330 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE and will conclude with a book signing. As always, admission is free but a reservation is required due to limited seating. Please email OverbeckLecture@CapitolHillHistory.org and indicate how many seats you will need. ★



The Overbeck History Lectures are a project of the Capitol Hill Community Foundation. Please remember CHCF in your charitable giving.

Activism, continued from page 7

membership. Its house tour, begun a few years earlier, was given credit for generating interest and enthusiasm for the neighborhood—and attracting new residents.

Established years before significant preservation legislation existed in the city, CHRS has since tackled many issues affecting the

character of the neighborhood, from fighting freeways through the core of Capitol Hill to preventing demolition and drastic alteration of historic structures. Members' research led to the creation of its Historic District. These efforts were all led by volunteers, continuing the long tradition of community activism.

Capitol Hill is the story of a neighborhood, buildings and people. Future articles will feature individuals involved with the 60 years of CHRS, established in January 1955—by activists. ★

CHRS Questions Need for “Southeast Boulevard”

IMAGE COURTESY SMITHGROUPJJR



CONCEPT C

In December 2014 CHRS again questioned the need for the Southeast Boulevard adjacent to L Street, SE. DC Department of Transportation (DDOT) has failed to show that this project is needed (with the exception of the pedestrian and bicycle connections). However, if the project goes forward, its benefits should be maximized and its adverse effects on residents near the project (particularly on the 1300–1500 blocks of L Street, SE) should be minimized. L Street residents currently enjoy a long view toward the Anacostia River, and a quiet street with long, unbroken rows of tall, mature street trees on the side of the street where the houses are. It is rare to see full blocks with trees like this. It is vital to preserve this streetscape, including those trees.

Councilmember Wells and ANC 6B have done the community a great service by involving the Office of Planning (OP), which has improved the concepts for this project. There are now three concepts under consideration, A, B, and C. OP and DDOT stressed that these are very preliminary concepts, and that additional studies need to be done, including legal, engineering, and economic feasibility. At this stage, our comments are necessarily based on

the assumption that Concept A, B, or C would go forward as presented on December 11, 2014.

Concept A would create a wall of relatively tall buildings directly across L Street, blocking the view, which would be claustrophobic for L Street residents. Concept A is the least desirable of three concepts. Concept B, with low-rise rowhouses across L Street, or Concept C, with fewer buildings and further away, are preferable. If future housing is constructed on land owned by DC government, we urge that this area be zoned R-4, and that 30% of housing units be affordable. All three concepts call for pedestrian and bicycle connections at 13th, 14th, and 15th Streets, extending the L'Enfant grid to M Street, SE. At the meeting on December 11, OP and DDOT representatives assured everyone that these connections by design, are for pedestrian and bicycle use only, and cannot not be used by motor vehicles. ★

Thank You, CHRS Supporters

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

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David Stute
Geraldine Regal
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Movies Under the Stars on Pennsylvania Avenue, SE

By Beth Purcell

We usually think of early 20th century movie theaters as ornate picture palaces and Capitol Hill certainly had a number of these. But some movie theaters showed films outdoors, like the Twilight Theatre at 1349 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, which operated between 1915 and 1921. Movie theaters attracted customers using elaborate electric signs and the Twilight Theatre was part of this trend, advertising films with a marquee of 49 clear incandescent bulbs above the sidewalk. The projector was housed in a booth; there were two toilets. The theater was apparently a success because Charles Linkins, who also owned the

Strand Theater at 9th and D Streets, NW, bought the theater and in 1921 invested in a second projector.

Mr. and Mrs. Miller, who were interviewed for the Overbeck History Project in 1974, recalled going to this outdoor movie theater on Pennsylvania Avenue. They said that if it rained before the end of the film, the theater would give out "rain checks" so people could return the next night to see the entire film.¹ Unfortunately, no record has been found of the films shown at the Twilight Theatre; the *Washington Post* published only the films showing at some of the larger theaters.

Sometime after 1921 the theater site was re-developed; today, the site is occupied by the Jenkins Row condominiums and Harris Teeter. ★

¹ DC Building permit # 5219 (14 May 1914), 5219 (5 June 1914), 7614 (7 June 1921). Boyd's Directory of the District of Columbia (1915-1922). "Movie Magnate Feted By District Exhibitors," *Washington Post*, 20 May 1926, 22. Ruth Ann Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project, Interview with Mr. and Mrs. John Miller, by Ruth Ann Perez and Hazel Kreinheder, 6 Nov. 1974, p. 7, www.capitolhillhistory.org > interviewees>Miller.

Q & A on Home Maintenance and Repair

CHRS encourages members and nonmembers to email questions about historic district guidelines. We try to answer questions as best we can. If you have a question, please e-mail CHRS at caphrs@aol.com.

Q: We had new Marvin Victorian windows installed in our Queen Anne and the contractor used faux wood PVC on 6 exterior sills. My expectation was that all materials used could be painted to go with our historic paint scheme. Even though our home is outside the historic district, we want to restore the house in a way that would be appropriate to the time it was built in 1892. Can you confirm if PVC material for the exterior sill would be acceptable if we were in the historic district? I understand that the Marvin windows would meet historic guidelines, which is why we went with that line.

A: A few years ago the requirement for windows was altered to allow many clad and non-wood windows within the historic district. See HPRB's "Window Repair and Replacement Preservation and Design Guidelines," www.planning.dc.gov/historicpreservation > Design Guidelines, on page 4, section 2.7 it describes acceptable materials do include non-wood windows. The proviso is that the profile of replacement materials closely match the original.

The second part of your question: yes, PVC can be painted but certain preparation is necessary for the paint to properly adhere, so make sure your painter knows how to work with PVC.



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

Mark Your Calendar!

FEBRUARY

2 Monday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Historic Preservation Committee,
Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first
floor. Details: Beth Purcell (202) 544-0178.

12 Thursday, 7:30 pm
CHRS Zoning Committee, Kirby House,
420 10th Street, SE, first floor.
Details: Gary Peterson, (202) 547-7969.

17 Tuesday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill
Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second
floor. Details: Lisa Dale Jones,
(202) 543-0425.

24 Tuesday, 7:30 pm
Overbeck Lecture: "Alice Dunnigan:
Alone atop the Hill." Carol McCabe Booker
will talk about Alice Dunnigan, the first
black woman in the national press corps
in Washington. The lecture will conclude
with a book signing of Dunnigan's newly
republished autobiography. Naval Lodge,
330 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE. Free;
reservations required. E-mail
OverbeckLecture@CapitolHillHistory.org.

MARCH

2 Monday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Historic Preservation Committee,
Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first
floor. Details: Beth Purcell (202) 544-0178.

12 Thursday, 7:30 pm
CHRS Zoning Committee, Kirby House,
420 10th Street, SE, first floor.
Details: Gary Peterson, (202) 547-7969.

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