



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

NEWS

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October 2017

September Members' Forum: The Restoration of the Capitol Dome

By Susan Burgerman

The Fall 2017 CHRS Members' Forum was held on September 27 at the Hill Center. The quarterly business meeting preceded the presentation; the main agenda item was the 2017–18 fiscal year budget. Susan Oursler, the Budget and Administration Committee Chair, presented the budget, which had been published in the last newsletter, for discussion. A vote was taken and the budget passed without objections. A change to the by-laws regulating members' meetings was also presented and passed by unanimous vote.

The guest speaker for the Forum was Robert Baird, the owner of Historical Arts and Castings, Inc., assisted by Seth Baum, an architect at the same firm. Historical Arts

and Castings, Inc. was the firm that restored the cast iron decorative elements on the Capitol Dome during the 2015–16 restoration and reconstruction. Following is an overview of his presentation.

By the mid-19th century, the Capitol building in DC was both unfinished and too small for the growing US Congress. Congress selected architect Thomas Ustick Walter in 1850 to enlarge and complete the building, including the addition of a proportionally appropriate dome. His design went into construction the following year. The House side was completed in 1857 and the Senate side in 1859.

Continued on page 6

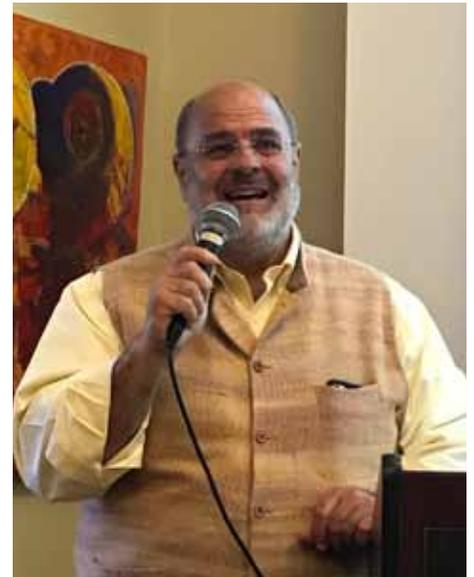


IMAGE COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON

Guest speaker Robert Baird presented on the history and restoration of the Capitol Dome.

Tennessee Avenue, Warren, and C Streets Historic Walking Tour: October 14, 2017

These streets have it all—fascinating history, famous architects, excellent architecture, including tiny houses, and all nearby. Come on a free walking tour and learn all about this amazing Capitol Hill treasure.

Saturday, October 14 at 10 am, rain or shine

Meet at the corner of 14th and C Streets, NE

For more details, or to RSVP (optional), contact the CHRS office at: caphrs@aol.com. The tour is free—the public is encouraged to attend!

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Zoning Committee Report

By Gary Peterson

During a meeting held on September 14, 2017, the committee considered the following cases:

BZA# 19562. The applicant proposes adding a two-story rear addition to 1362 East Capitol NE that will extend more than 10 feet beyond neighboring properties by 2.5 additional feet. The addition will stay below the maximum lot coverage of 60% and will preserve and extend a five-foot-wide dogleg. The neighbors on both sides support the application. The Committee voted unanimously to support the special exception noting that a large amount of open space remains at the rear of the property.

BZA# 19563. In this case the applicant wants to fill in a dogleg and add a small two-story addition to 1203 D Street NE. The back of the addition will line up with the back of the adjacent properties. In order to do this, the applicant needs a special exception to exceed the matter or right lot occupancy of 60%. The building currently occupies 60% of the lot and the proposal is to occupy 67%. The neighbors to the east support the application. The building to the west is an apartment building and the owner has not responded. The Committee voted unanimously to support the application.

BZA# 19565. This property is a small house at 237 Warren Street NE, covering 615 square feet of a lot the contains 1,670 square feet. The applicant proposes to add a third floor to the existing building and a three floor addition to the rear of the property. The proposed addition more than doubles the size of the house. The applicant needs special exceptions because the rear of the

house will extend 20 feet beyond the rear of the other houses and because the third floor in front will change the cornice line. The Committee believed that this request did not meet the test for a special exception because the impact on adjacent properties was too great and the change in the cornice line of this matching row was too dramatic. The Committee would support a setback third floor and a smaller rear addition.

BZA# 19566. This case at 225 Tennessee Avenue NE is similar to the preceding except the three story addition is only to the rear of a two story house and the third floor doesn't change the cornice line and is not visible from the street. The Committee opposes the addition because it extends 24.5 feet back from the adjacent neighbors and will have a substantial impact upon them.

BZA# 19570. This case involves a variance to increase the number of apartments from 12 to 13 at 202 2nd Street SE. The building has a partial basement that originally had storage, trash and laundry facilities. The applicant is putting laundry facilities in each apartment and argues no storage is necessary because each apartment is 800 square feet and has two bedrooms. The problem is that there is now no provision for locating the trash in the building and the rear of the building is no longer accessible because of the basement conversion. The applicant proposes putting the bicycle racks in the rear, but a tenant will have to walk two blocks to get to the storage. The Committee voted to oppose this variance because the applicant has not met the test for a variance and has not solved the trash and storage issues.

BZA# 19574. This is an unusual case at 10 3rd Street NE where there has been a three-story carriage house apartment and two flats in the main dwelling for 80+ years. We know this because the same family has owned the property for that time. Unfortunately there is a certificate of occupancy for only two units. This was discovered when the applicant applied for a building permit to remodel the carriage house. For this reason, the applicant needs a variance to allow three units. A proposed roof deck on the carriage house has been scrapped. The Committee voted to take no position on this application, not wanting to set a precedent.

BZA# 19575. This is another unusual case. At 104 8th Street NE the existing house is considered three stories because the ceiling of the basement is more than four feet above the ground level (in this case it is six feet). The applicant proposes adding another floor to the rear of the building. The addition will be set back 13 feet and will not be visible from the street. However, the rear addition will exceed the 35 foot height limitation by one to two inches. It is possible to lower the rear structure to 35 feet and the Committee voted to support the application if the height is changed. ★

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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.

ABOUT CHRS

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

Since its founding in 1955, 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

September Preservation Café

By Gregoire Holeyman, AIA

The September Preservation Café featured Paul K. Williams, President of the Historic Congressional Cemetery, the not-for-profit organization that runs and maintains the Capitol Hill cemetery. It was a well-attended slideshow with a Q&A session afterwards.

Until the mid-1830s, practically every Congressman who died in Washington was buried in Congressional Cemetery, marked by cenotaphs designed by famous architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe. Over the years, the property grew to encompass 35 acres and became known as Congressional Cemetery.

It is the only place in Washington where one can be buried in a site directly on L'Enfant's 18th-century city plan.

Now a National Historic Landmark, Congressional Cemetery is flourishing. The brick pathways and slate walks are restored to their original beauty. New trees are being planted and new gardens bloom. The cemetery stages regular educational events, tours, fundraisers, and even 5k races. Marching bands, including the world-famous US Marine Band, regularly play at the grave of John Philip Sousa. ★

Upcoming Preservation Cafés

Joe Bellosi, President of J and G Electric Co., will present "This Old (but Great) House... Wiring and Safety" on Wednesday, October 18, 2017, at 6:30pm at the Northeast Neighborhood Library. Joe will discuss electrical wiring and other safety concerns found in historic Capitol Hill residences.

Dr. Ruth Troccoli, District Archaeologist at the DC Historic Preservation Office, will be the featured speaker on Wednesday, November 15, 2017, at 6:30pm at the Northeast Neighborhood Library. Dr. Troccoli will present "The Shotgun House Revisited," an update on the excavation of the site at 1229 E Street SE, a pre-civil war home which is often referred to as "the shotgun house" for its architectural style. In the months since the excavation, additional analysis has been performed on the recovered material and further research done on archival and oral history sources.

Historic Preservation Briefs

By Beth Purcell

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB or the Board) considered the following cases on September 28, 2017. 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.

226 Kentucky Avenue SE, HPA-17-493, concept/rear and rooftop additions on four-unit apartment building. Please see CHRS News, September 2017, for prior reporting on this case. At the July hearing, the Board directed that the third-story addition be further reduced in height, and to increase the set back on the front roof deck. We believed that the new plans satisfied the Board’s requirements. One neighbor testified against the project, citing the height of the third story in the rear, making the apartment building the most massive on the block. The Board approved the concept, adding that the staff must maintain close communication with the applicant to monitor the height of the addition during construction.

418, 420 7th Street SE, HPA 17-481, concept/combine two rowhouses; rear and rooftop additions; and new building at rear of lot. Please see CHRS News, September 2017 for prior reporting on this case. As of the July hearing on this case, we believed that the project, involving hollowing out two adjacent rowhouses and building a large tall new “carriage



IMAGE COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON

A street-level view of 600 Pennsylvania Avenue SE.

house” on the rear of the lot were not compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District. The Board found the concept incompatible with the historic district.

For the project to be compatible, the plans should be modified to accomplish the following: (1) significantly reduce the amount of demolition to be consistent with DCMR 10-C, Section 305; (2) retain the rear elevation walls; (3) pull the rooftop addition in several feet from the rear elevations, eliminate the deck at the front of the roof, and relocate the HVAC equipment off the roof of the roof addition, and prepare a roof mock-up of the proposed roof addition to test for visibility; (4) inset any infill next to the dog-leg additions from the rear elevations to retain a memory of the original massing and rhythm of the rear elevations; (5) limit the height of the new rear building to 20 feet and explore the possibility of pushing it further back on the lot.

The applicant decided not to build the carriage house and instead to enlarge the rear addition. In the revised plans submitted to the

Board for the September hearing, the floor joists and the party wall between the houses would be retained, with two new openings. While the interior walls are not original, and demolition does not raise preservation issues, the rear walls would be demolished. As a “memory of the [doglegs’] original massing and rhythm of the rear elevations,” the applicant proposed a 12-inch notch in the rear of the addition, inadequate in our view, but acceptable to the Board, which approved the concept.

400-418 D Street SE (Ebenezer Flats), HPA 17-488, concept/construct five new townhouses. Ebenezer United Methodist Church, together with a developer, plans to build five new three-story rowhouses with basements on vacant land owned by the church and ground leased to an LLC. The site has a raised berm, and as a result, a long flight of stairs would be needed to reach the front door; HBRB decided that the rowhouses should be sunk 12-18 inches lower, to compensate for the topography, and reduce the building

height viewed by neighbors. The project also calls for building rooftop additions on two rowhouses at 416–418 D Street SE (built in 1894), set back from the front and rear. The concept was approved with additional design changes to be coordinated with the staff.

The most controversial aspect of the project was the plan to make a new curb cut on 5th Street SE and build an access road leading to a parking lot in the interior of the square. This would create spaces for seven cars on grade and space for a parking structure to accommodate additional cars on one or two additional levels. Because there are already curb cuts in this square, HPRB determined that they had no authority to rule on the curb cut or access road.

We believed that an important preservation issue remained: HPRB's publication on landscaping allows adding a new driveway or parking area for a rowhouse in a residential rowhouse neighborhood, where

appropriate, and traffic and noise are inherently limited because the driveway serves only a single house, unlike the planned access road parking lot for multiple cars in this case. Three neighbors testified against the parking lot and one neighbor supported it. The Board did not rule on the curb cut or access road and directed the applicant to return on a consent calendar with plans to house or shield the parking structure.

600 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, HPA 17-594, concept/installation of storefronts. This five-story Colonial Revival building with dormers dominates the 600 block of Pennsylvania Avenue SE. It has nine archways on the first story, resting on six piers—these are the most architecturally distinctive features of the building. Because it was built in 1975 (after the period of significance, which ends in 1945), it is not a “contributing building,” and for that reason the law allows more flexibility for alterations.

The applicant has made the case that for public safety reasons, the space behind the piers (the arcade) needs to be enclosed. But the proposed solution, a line of strip-mall store fronts obliterating the archways, is inappropriate and we believed that there are far better ways to meet public safety needs. We urged a total redesign—that all the piers and archways be maintained, while filling in the arcade space under the archways. We also asked that the applicant suggest signage and lighting (how the building would appear at night). The Board ruled that the archways should remain and suggested additional design modifications. ★

Interested in learning more about historic district designation?

Contact CHRS at caphrs@aol.com.

CHRS at Barracks Row Fall Festival

By Joanna Kendig

Despite the abundance of competing activities, plenty of folks chose Barracks Row as their destination September 23. We extended invitations to our upcoming events, including the Preservation Cafés, the

September Membership Meeting and the Warren Street Walking Tour. We received a very positive response, especially with respect to the House Expo on October 22.

We distributed stacks of newsletters and House & Garden Tour catalogs, previewing the May 12–13, 2018 event. This year we even had logo'd lip-balm to add to our standard pencils and magnets to give away. We entertained our youngest visitors with beads to string, temporary tattoos and crayons. One budding artist left us with a drawing of her grandma's house on 10th Street.

Many thanks to those who helped make our participation possible: Chuck Burger, Angie Schmidt, Nancy Metzger, Janet Quigley, Monte Edwards, Michelle Carroll, and Joanna Kendig for staffing the booth and especially to Gene Imhoff, who transported all the materials.

And while you enjoy your own memories of this year's festival think of volunteering your help next year—it's a great opportunity to chat with neighbors, people-watch and spread the word about CHRS. ★



IMAGE COURTESY JOANNA KENDIG

He drew inspiration for his dome design from St. Isaac's Cathedral in St. Petersburg, Russia. The decision to use cast iron, which was uncommon at the time, was dictated by need – the main building's structure could not support a stone dome. Mr. Walter's plans for the Dome were approved and its construction begun in 1855. The Freedom Statue was placed at the top in December 1863, and the Dome was finally completed in 1866. Construction continued right through the Civil War at the urging of President Lincoln, who considered that the nation at war deeply needed an impressive symbol of the Union's strength and endurance.

The Dome is actually two domes: an interior shell connected to the exterior shell by a ribcage of cast iron trusses. The 8,900,000 pounds of iron was cast in Bronx, NY, by the Jaynes, Fowler, and Kirtland Company, then the elements were transported to Washington to be assembled on site. As with most pre-Emancipation buildings in Washington, the labor was largely provided by hired-out slaves whose owners had no immediate use for them.

The Capitol building has undergone successive restorations since it was built, but maintenance of the Dome was deferred for so long that it was full of leaks and in dire need of restoration when Congress finally funded the project. Most of the first year was spent constructing the huge, elaborate scaffolding—which was stunning when lit up at night. Once they were able to begin, the Historical Arts and Castings crew, working from the top down, found corroded and broken castings; fractures in the iron caused by dissimilar alloys; rust jacking—where water seeps between two castings, rust forms and expands, and eventually the pieces burst apart; and places where the castings had gone missing. Everything that was missing



Artifacts recovered during the restoration of the Dome.

or broken had to be replicated at the company's studio in Salt Lake City, using digital scanning to recreate the original design.

As cast iron cannot simply be welded into place, they relied on a variety of restoration methods. For example, they used a lock and stitch process to fix fractures. This entails replacing thousands of corroded fasteners (these look like large screws) with identical steel fasteners, then connecting them crosswise to lock the fractured material back into place. Around ten thousand cracks were repaired by this means, equivalent to many miles. At roughly two hours per inch, this was an incredibly time-consuming task.

Another time-consuming—and costly, and unforeseen—task was to eliminate the asbestos caulking that they discovered when they got up on the Dome. It had to be carefully removed from the structure and thoroughly vacuumed. Mr. Baird noted that twenty or thirty women formed the crew doing the asbestos removal. Lead paint was also ubiquitous and somewhat easier to remove; it could be sandblasted off and the resulting dust was then vacuumed up.

The Historical Arts and Castings crew had lots of company on the Dome, including the nonhuman residents—there were eagles, red foxes, and one terrified racoon who managed to climb the scaffolding

all the way to the top. Members of the crew rescued him and later released him in the Arboretum. They also found many birds nests and bat roosts around the columns at the top, waste products from which accounted for much of the corrosion.

Another surprise was that the Dome is not perfectly round. In fact, as they discovered when fitting the repaired and replicated castings onto the round template at the Salt Lake studio, it is slightly egg-shaped, the result of minor human errors in the original assembly process.

One theme that arose frequently during Mr. Baird's presentation was the brilliance of the engineering—advanced for the period—and the excellence of the craftsmanship that went into the Capitol Dome. Mr. Baird, whose father founded Historical Arts and Castings and who was virtually raised in historic buildings with significant cast iron elements, had never seen anything so meticulously and beautifully crafted as the Dome. He described it as a testament to the great honor and pride that the artisans and workers must have felt in constructing this powerful symbol of their nation, particularly important as it was under threat of dissolution. ★

Visit the Free CHRS House Expo October 22

The Society is once again hosting the well-received House Expo this fall. Mark your calendars for Sunday, October 22nd from 10 am–4 pm in the Eastern Market North Hall. This is an excellent opportunity to talk with approximately 30 home service exhibitors. Experts will help you with ideas on ways to repair or enhance your home. Take advantage of the chance to meet service providers such as architects, general contractors, house historians, energy conservation experts, home inspectors, painters, solar panel installers, insurance agents, HVAC specialists and more. Plus, a fun-for-all-ages “Tool Zoo”. The event is free and handicapped accessible. The more, the merrier—so invite your friends and neighbors! ★



IMAGE COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON

Exhibitor Merlino Construction Group talks with visitors at the 2016 House Expo.

Help Make the House Expo A Success!

This is our second offering of what we hope will be an annual event. The House Expo Team has done a great job of arranging a venue and recruiting craftsmen and tradespeople. But we need many hands to manage logistics the day of the event. If you can help, even for a short time, please contact our Communications Committee Chair, Nina Tristani, at ninalt19@gmail.com or (202) 497-1099.

Time for Hilloween

Hilloween is an annual free street party outside of Eastern Market (7th Street SE from North Carolina Avenue to Pennsylvania Avenue SE). This year it's scheduled for Friday, October 27, from 5:30–7:30pm. CHRS will host an activity table with temporary tattoos and beads to string, plus CHRS pencils and a boatload of candy from a generous supporter. This is an excellent opportunity to let our neighbors get to know us and the organization we represent—and it's fun to see all the children in their costumes! If you can help staff the booth, please email elizabeth_knits@yahoo.com.



IMAGE COURTESY ANGIE SCHMIDT



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

Capitol Hill Restoration Society

420 10th Street SE
Washington, DC 20003

Mark Your Calendar!

OCTOBER

12 Thursday, 7:30 pm

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

14 Saturday, 10 am

Free Walking Tour of Warren Street NE. Meet at the corner of 14th and C Streets NE, rain or shine. Details: Beth Purcell (202) 544-0178.

17 Tuesday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street SE, second floor board room. Details: Elizabeth Nelson, (202) 543-0425, info@chrs.org.

18 Wednesday 6:30 pm

Historic Preservation Café: "This Old (but Great) House—Wiring & Safety." Northeast Neighborhood Library, 330 7th Street NE (lower level). Details: (202) 543-0425, info@chrs.org.

22 Sunday, 10 am

CHRS House Expo, Eastern Market North Hall, corner of 7th Street & North Carolina Avenue SE. Details: Michelle Carroll, pilliodmp@aol.com.

27 Friday, 5:30 pm

Hilloween. 7th Street SE between Pennsylvania Avenue and North Carolina Avenue. Come visit our table! Free.

NOVEMBER

15 Wednesday 6:30 pm

Historic Preservation Café: "The Shotgun House Revisited." Northeast Neighborhood Library, 330 7th Street NE (lower level). Details: (202) 543-0425, info@chrs.org.

If you received a complimentary copy of this newsletter, please consider joining CHRS!
www.chrs.org