



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

NEWS

www.chrs.org

December 2017/January 2018

Watkins School Renovation Praised for Birdsafe Design

By Beth Purcell

The renovated Watkins Elementary School opened this fall. Its new multipurpose room is attractive and functional, and has another major positive attribute—it will safeguard birds from colliding with the school’s windows.

While we generally think of the District of Columbia as an urban area, DC in fact provides a year-round habitat for many bird species. DC is also a stopping-place on the spring and fall migration of many birds (April-May and September-October). DC is right on the Atlantic Flyway for birds migrating between New England and Central America.

Some buildings in DC, because of their design and/or nighttime lighting, attract birds, resulting in many preventable bird deaths. After flying approximately 200 miles per night, a flock of migrating birds sets down to rest and feed during the day. After landing around dawn, they begin to fly around nearby to look for food. They are attracted to what appear to them to be open areas, especially areas with plants or trees. Reflective or transparent glass appears to birds to be open space. Some buildings with large expanses of transparent or reflective glass attract birds flying at lower levels.



IMAGE COURTESY PERKINS EASTMAN DC

The birds fly toward the buildings, collide, and die.

However, buildings with significant amount of glass can be made bird-safe by adding features that read as a barrier to birds and they will avoid the building. This life-saving barrier can be created in several attractive ways. For example, the Watkins school has a large expanse of transparent glass on classrooms and the multipurpose wing and would present a danger to birds. Mary R. Rankin, AIA, and her team at Perkins Eastman DC, designed the building, adding an attractive metal sunscreen, which

Attractive metal sunscreens protect the windows and the birds at Watkins Elementary.

Also in this issue

ARTICLES

November Preservation Café..... 3

COLUMNS

President’s Column..... 2

Historic Preservation Briefs 4

Zoning Briefs..... 6

CHRS Supporters..... 6

LOOKING AHEAD

2018 House & Garden Tour 4

Masonry Seminar 7

Mark Your Calendar..... 8

Continued on page 2

As the Year Ends... A Message from the President

It's the end of another year and a time to reflect on my good fortune. I'm grateful to live in a place that delights the eye with people I care about. I can get around just fine without driving and have access to the very best in food, outdoor spaces and the arts. I'm grateful for the visionaries who established the Capitol Hill Restoration Society and everyone who continues the work of preserving the community that means so much to all of us.

The past year has been busy and productive; we've continued our traditions and pursued new ways to demonstrate our value to the Capitol Hill community.

- In March we held the third Dick Wolf Memorial Lecture at the Hill Center to a capacity crowd. The topic, "Adapting to Sea Level Rise," is particularly timely.
- Mother's Day weekend saw the return of the annual House & Garden Tour. This year, we included an outdoor walking tour of historic Terrace Court NE in addition to 10 private homes.
- Our June and September Membership Meetings featured outstanding speakers on the archaeological dig at the Shotgun House and the restoration of the ironwork on the Capitol Dome, respectively. And we hosted six Preservation Cafés on topics including ironwork, electrical wiring and safety, and masonry.
- In October we led a walking tour centered on Warren Street NE, Emerald Street NE and the row of one-story Gessford homes around the corner on C Street.
- October also brought our second annual House Expo, highlighting service providers working on Capitol Hill.

- We assisted Emerald Street neighbors in their quest for historic designation, supported the residents of the 1500 block of A Street NE in their fight against inappropriate development, and participated in community building activities including the Barracks Row Fall Festival and Halloween.
- Throughout the year our dedicated volunteers represent your interests at community meetings held by developers and government entities, as well as hearings before Congress, the Council, and regulatory agencies. They help you and your neighbors understand how to follow historic district and zoning guidelines when renovating your homes. And they advocate for policies that enhance our quality of life.

And in between all that, we've made time to address your concerns... Whether zoning and historic preservation cases, inappropriate signage, development of public property, or transportation planning, if it's important to you, it's important to all of us.

Watkins, *continued from cover*

serves the additional purpose of adding bird-safe "noise" such as "... using structures like screens, louvers, shutters, and shades to cover the outside of glass," strategies also used for "controlling heat, light, and glare."¹

The DC Chapter of the American Institute of Architects held a meeting in September on bird-friendly design. Anne Lewis, FAIA, President of City Wildlife, and Christine Sheppard praised the Watkins bird-

None of this would have been possible without your help—your time, your energy and your financial support.

Please consider a tax-deductible gift to the CHRS Annual Fund in addition to your membership dues; your gift really will make a difference in keeping Capitol Hill the vibrant, beautiful historic neighborhood we all love. Checks can be mailed to Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS), P.O. Box 15264, Washington, DC 20003-0264 or go to our website: chrs.org/join-chrs.

Thank you for your membership and support of CHRS. I wish you a happy and healthy holiday season and a fabulous Capitol Hill 2018! ★

— Elizabeth

safe design. For more information on bird-friendly design for homes and commercial buildings, visit: collisions.abcbirds.org. ★

¹ Christine Sheppard, Ph.D., Director, Glass Collisions Program with American Bird Conservancy, "Metal Architecture and Bird Conservation," *Metal Architecture*, Sept. 2017, 9. www.metalarchitecture.com.

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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

November Preservation Café

By Gregoire Holeyman, AIA

The November 2017 Preservation Café, titled “Coopers, Peddlers, and Bricklayers: Telling the Story of a Working-Class Property through Public Archaeology in Capitol Hill,” was led by Dr. Ruth Troccoli, District Archaeologist with the Historic Preservation Office. Also taking part in the presentation were Christine Ames, MA, DC HPO, Assistant Archaeologist; John Hyche, University of Maryland Anthropology Graduate Student; Julianna Jackson, MA, DC HPO, Staff Assistant; and Nikki Grigg, Independent Scholar.

The presentation focused on the past year's effort to document the shotgun house at 1229 E Street SE. Shotgun houses are a vernacular building type constructed predominantly in towns and cities of the American South, generally for working class families, and are distinguished by their long narrow gabled form and floor plan, which is one room wide and two or more rooms deep with no hallway

At the beginning of the 18th century, economic problems in Germany brought a new wave of immigrants. For decades, Germans were the largest non-English-speaking immigrant group in America. Nearly one million German immigrants entered the United States in the 1850s. Between 1820 and 1924, over 5.5 million German immigrants arrived in the United States, many of them middle class, urban, and working in the skilled trades. Others established farming communities in the West. Many of these immigrants eventually settled in DC. The history of the Shotgun House reflects this history.

In 1850, John Biegler (or Briegler), a German carpenter immigrant,

bought Lots 4 and 7 (the Shotgun House Lot) in Square 1019. In 1853, John Biegler sold Lot 7 to Ernst August Tungal (another German carpenter) and by 1887, he added a frame addition to the rear of the Shotgun House. In the 1890s–1900, John Herke, a copper working at the nearby National Capital Brewery, and family (last German immigrant occupants) rented 1229 E Street SE. A *Washington Post* article from 1900 publishes the following description of Herke's death as “a Result of Drink ... after drinking heavily for a month. He began breaking furniture, frightening wife and children, and was taken to Washington Asylum Hospital; died Sept. 2.”

In 1905, Daniel C. Hartley bought the Shotgun House property and the family built a brick garage at the rear of the lot in 1917 and added a brick kitchen onto the back of the house in 1938. The family and their descendants occupied the home until 1985, when it was abandoned. In 1999, DC HPO and DCRA began enforcement after years of neglect. In July 2016, HPRB approved new concept for the Shotgun House property with the stipulation that the DC HPO Archaeology Team be allowed access to conduct an archaeological investigation, which was carried out until mid-2017. Highlights of finds from the investigations included layers of trash buried in the backyard and many types and forms of local beer bottles.

The digging or excavation at historic properties destroys the information contained within the site. If any DC resident sees illegal looting or vandalism at these historic properties, please call (202) 442-8836. ★

Historic Preservation Briefs

By Alison Ross and Beth Purcell

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB or the Board) considered the following cases on October 26 and November 16, 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.

600 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, HPA 17-594, concept / installation of storefronts. See October 2017 CHRS News for prior reporting. 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 storefronts obliterating the archways is, we believe, inappropriate. We urged a total redesign—that the tall piers and archways be maintained, while filling in the arcade space under the archways.

At its September 28, 2017, hearing the Board made four rulings, including that the existing arched masonry openings be retained

and requiring detailed storefront drawings to ensure that the storefront relates in detailing and character with the historic district. The applicant’s latest plan still fails to retain the archways, and the Board found that the project is not compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District.

326 A Street SE, HPA 17-591, demolition and reconstruction of two-story frame house and new three-story rear and side addition. This contributing two-story vernacular frame house was built between 1854 and 1857, probably by John H. Kidwell, a carpenter. It has Greek Revival elements—simple square Doric porch columns, a wide band of trim along each of the two-story full-width porches, and simple entablature with transom above the front entrance.

The floor plan further exemplifies the style with a symmetrical façade—the entrance is on the side through the five-bay porch. Inside is a center-passage, one-room deep plan. On the street-facing (south) elevation, a porch was added in 1922. As far as we can determine, the side entrance has always been the main entrance and there was never an entrance through the street-facing porch.

The applicant proposed to demolish the house, entirely or in significant part, although the engineer’s report indicated that demolition is not structurally necessary. The Board ruled against demolition in a 2014 case, where the owner of the shotgun house, 1229 E Street SE, sought a permit to raze the building, based on his engineer’s report that the building had deteriorated to the point that demolition was the only option (HPA 14-435, September 18, 2014.¹) Before the hearing, HPO and DCRA staff inspected the building

House & Garden Tour Update

The 2018 House and Garden Tour Committee has begun planning the yearly fundraiser. The footprint for next year’s tour is the area around Brent Elementary School, St. Peter Interparish School and Providence Park. The American Legion Kenneth Nash Post 8 at 224 D Street SE will be a spot where participants can stop for refreshment. The Committee welcomes any leads or offers for buildings in the area to add to the tour. If you have a suggestion, or want to offer your own home, please contact Michelle Carroll, Chair, at (202) 421-8698.

and determined that it remained salvageable. For this reason, the Board denied the raze permit. We argued that the key is that HPO’s experts need to check the opinion of an applicant’s engineer.

326 A Street SE is perched on top of a hill and set back from the street. It has its principal entrance facing east to the side yard, an unusual feature for a Capitol Hill house. As described in the newspaper advertisements, the side yard and the two-story porches have been significant selling features throughout the life of the house. The berm on this property tells the history of the house—it was built before streets were graded and natural topography was a part of siting the building. The relationship of the front entrance of this house elevated on the hill above the pedestrian on the street is a character-defining feature. The Board decided that the side entrance must be retained.

CHRS was concerned that the proposed plans modify character-defining features by eliminating the

original front entrance, enclosing the first-floor porch with row of continuous casement windows, and reducing the five-bay two-story porch to four bays. As recommended in our Capitol Hill Historic District Guidelines, it is important to preserve the existing relationship of the first-floor entrance of the house to grade. Without maintaining the original location of the front entrance, the house becomes estranged from the landscape around it.

Furthermore, Capitol Hill has a small number of pre-Civil War wood frame houses with original wood porches remaining as well as a history of adding porches across the front of houses in the early 20th century. This house tells the history of both of these eras which are within the period of significance for the Capitol Hill Historic District. The Board decided that if the applicant wishes to propose demolition of the house they complete a thorough conditions report detailing the existing conditions at the property and a document detailing plans to dismantle, salvage, relocate, and reconstruct the original house should be developed and that as much original historic fabric be retained and reused as possible; that the entrance at the house's east elevation be retained; and the further refinements be made to the design at the side addition.

This property is also unique in that there is a large side yard within the interior of a block. The new side addition is designed in the Second Empire style and is set back behind a retaining wall could be compatible, but at this point, the proposed addition is not subordinate to the historic house. The historic house as it stands now, including the basement and areas of both porches, is 1,619 square feet. If we exclude the original open porch on the first floor and the basement, the area is even smaller.

The proposed addition is clearly much larger than the historic house, with a total of 5,393 square feet and

would loom over the historic house. Making the two houses look separate respects the importance of the historic structure. However, the size, style, and massing of the proposed formal high-style addition makes the modest vernacular historic structure appear even more diminished. We thought that a subordinate two-story Second Empire addition could complement the historic vernacular house. The Board ruled that further refinements be made to the design at the side addition.

Our hearing testimony at chrs.org has additional research on this house.

1015 D Street NE, HPA 18-041, concept/alterations, rear addition and dormers. This church was originally St. Matthew's Lutheran Chapel, designed in 1900 by Louis F. Stutz, who designed other Lutheran churches, including the church at 801 North Carolina Avenue, SE (1896). An Evening Star article dated May 12, 1900 describes the church as having "a very picturesque elevation, with long sloping roof front laid up in pressed brick, and the projecting porch vestibule, the belvedere built to rise from the apex of the roof" (sic) and sited "on a terrace three feet above the sidewalk and set back from the building line eleven feet." The applicant's research indicates the cupola was not actually constructed.

The applicant proposes an adaptive re-use of this church into two residential units. At the rear, a modern, three-story structure will be added, connected to the existing structure at all levels. Six gabled dormers will be introduced at the roof, and the front entrance will be retained, preserving an important visual clue to the structure's ecclesiastical origins. The applicant will restore the stained-glass windows on the front elevation, and will work with HPO staff on retaining as much of the stained glass on the side elevations.

716-718 L Street SE, HPA 17-658, concept/rear and rooftop additions and storefront infill. The applicants requested concept review of their project to convert these two buildings as a black box theater and office condominiums, proposing an addition on the rear, side, and also a new white metal-clad fourth story, set back 10 feet from the front, and a penthouse set back approximately 38 feet from the front.

These are contributing buildings, constructed in 1925. They are three-stories, in red tapestry brick, American bond 5:1 coursing, with soldier course lintels and header brick sills. A photograph from 1949 likely shows the buildings' original appearance, with six-over-one single windows and triple windows with six-over-one in the center and what appear to be four-over-one on each side. CHRS suggested the applicant return to the six-over-one and four-over-one windows as seen in the 1949 photograph.

The new fourth story and penthouse would be visible from across L Street and from 8th Street. In a recent case involving a two-story commercial building, 507 8th Street SE, HPA 16-518, the Board found the concept of adding a two-story addition of this size and visibility from the 8th Street SE right-of-way to be incompatible with the character of the historic district. The Board advised the applicant to reduce the addition such that it will be smaller and less visible from the 8th Street SE right-of-way and return to the Board for further review.

This project is very similar and should not be approved in its current form. CHRS was concerned that the proposed rear addition, fourth story, and penthouse at 7,558 square feet, overwhelm the historic building at 4,731 square feet and are therefore not subordinate to the historic building. However, HPO felt that the location of this property and the vernacular

Continued on page 7

Zoning Committee Report

During a meeting held on November 9, 2017, the committee considered the following cases:

BZA #19616, 818 Potomac Avenue SE. The applicant is building a four-story plus penthouse building on the property. The property is in the 8th Street mixed use zone and is zoned NC-6. The zone requires retail use on the first floor and a mix of commercial and residential on the floors above. The commercial part of the building is allowed 100% lot occupancy and the residential 75%. The applicant proposes to make the entire building residential and to have a lot occupancy of 78% for the first two floors. The penthouse will be set back on three sides at a 1:1 ratio. On the 4th side the penthouse abuts the existing side wall of a contributing building in the historic district. The penthouse will not be visible from the street. To build the project the applicant needs special exception relief from the lot occupancy requirement, the retail use requirement, and the penthouse setback requirement. The property is on a stub of Potomac Avenue and the committee agreed that retail use is not viable at this location. The committee found that the special exceptions requested were reasonable and the committee voted to support the application.

BZA #19618, 19 4th Street NE (rear). This case involves a two-story carriage house/warehouse that covers 91% of a 648 sq. ft. lot. The applicant proposes to convert the building to residential use. She needs a special exception because the alley is only 10 feet wide instead of the required 15 feet. Because construction will take place on a 10 foot alley, the committee agreed with adjacent owners that a construction management agreement (drafted and signed by the construction foreman and the property owner to establish roles

and responsibilities, deadlines and specifics) is needed. The committee voted to support the application provided there is such an agreement.

BZA #19631, 602 E Street SE. The owners of this property are seeking zoning relief to convert an existing three unit row house into a two-unit project with one unit in the house and another in a three-story accessory building fronting on South Carolina. The lot in this case faces both E Street in the front and South Carolina in the rear. The new building facing South Carolina will be built to mimic a row house and will have an appropriate entrance on the avenue. To accomplish this feat, the applicant needs six variances and one special exception. The six variances are:

- 1) Maximum lot occupancy—existing 50%, permitted 60%, and 76% requested;
- 2) Minimum height and maximum stories—two stories and 20 feet permitted and 3 stories and 28 feet requested;
- 3) Maximum lot occupancy of an accessory building—450 sq. ft. permitted and 535 sq. ft. requested;
- 4) Minimum rear yard—20 feet required and 8 feet requested;
- 5) Minimum side yard—2 feet required and 1.8 feet currently exist;
- 6) To allow a roof deck on an accessory building that houses a principal dwelling unit.

The special exception is required to allow a principal dwelling unit in an accessory building.

The applicant had previously submitted plans that needed no zoning relief that expanded the existing building and did not have an accessory building. He stated at the meeting that this plan was a viable

project. Neighbors to the east on E Street objected to this plan because the expanded building would block their view of South Carolina Avenue. The current plan is supposed to address the objection. The committee voted to oppose the variances requested. The applicant does not meet the test for a variance because he already has a viable plan.

BZA #19655, 508 7th Street SE. In this case the applicant is removing a one-story rear addition and replacing it with a two story rear addition on approximately the same footprint. He needs special exceptions because the house already has nonconforming lot coverage, rear yard and side yard. The committee voted to support the application because the lot occupancy is being reduced to 70%, the rear yard is being increased by 6 inches, and the side yard remains unchanged. ★

Thank You, CHRS Supporters!

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Kathryn Powers

SILVER

Stephen & Maygene Daniels
William Hackett
Amy Weinstein

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Jeff & Tara Fletcher

FRIEND OF CHRS

Nobuo & Carol Akiyama
David Moore
Ralph Phillips & Alice Hall

Historic Brick and Masonry Construction Seminar

Come learn about your historic home's masonry and cement/concrete structure with Gary Barnhart, of GL Barnhart Construction, Saturday, January 20, 2018 from 11 am–12 pm at Jenks & Son Hardware, 910 Bladensburg Road NE, Washington, DC 20002.

The vast majority of the homes and buildings in our nation's capitol were built over 100 years ago from historic masonry. The mortar of our brick buildings is in most cases well beyond its useful life, and as the brick and stone facades have aged the historic mortar has deteriorated significantly. These masonry and brick walls can be maintained and repaired. In most cases brick tuckpointing is required. However, the majority of masons in the US work on new construction only and do not understand the critical differences in historic masonry restoration. Learn what makes tuckpointing right from wrong and learn about how our historic buildings were built.

This event is free but has a limited number of spots; prior



IMAGE COURTESY GARY BARNHART

A close view of a historic brick wall in need of restoration.

registration is required. Please rsvp to: info@glbarnhart.com.

This seminar will show examples and discuss some of the most common issues with old DC masonry construction, including:

- Deteriorated mortar joints and proper historically accurate repair
- How to avoid problems associated with modern materials
- How to mix and apply mortar to masonry
- The different type of brick construction including the various type of structural masonry elements within a typical row home
- Structural elements such as load path and masonry spans at door and window openings, proper tools and correct use
- The anatomy of a masonry wall and more.

This event is supported by community partners including Community Forklift and the Capitol Hill Restoration Society.

You can view the invitation at the following link: www.glbarnhart.com/community. Resources and reference information are available at: www.glbarnhart.com. ★

Preservation Briefs, *continued from page 5*

style allowed for more flexibility in the rehabilitation of the building.

CHRS agreed with HPO's report that the side and fourth story addition needed to be pulled back another 10' from the façade. The Board decided that the applicant can move forward on this project and work with staff on the final drawings.

The following case appeared on the consent calendar:

- Capitol Hill United Methodist Church, 421 Seward Square SE, HPA 18-044, concept/rooftop addition. ★

¹ In 2016, the shotgun house's new owner received permission from the Board to move the shotgun house four feet to the west, and in this context the Board allowed the house to be dismantled and reconstructed. HPA 16-379.

Interested in learning more about historic district designation?

Contact CHRS at caphrs@aol.com.



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

Capitol Hill Restoration Society

420 10th Street SE
Washington, DC 20003

Mark Your Calendar!

DECEMBER

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

19 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.

If you received a complimentary
copy of this newsletter, please
consider joining CHRS!
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JANUARY

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

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

16 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.