



NEWS

www.chrs.org

November 2001

Society Sponsors Historic District Enlargement

by Nancy Metzger, Chair Historic District Committee

The Capitol Hill Restoration Society has submitted a boundary increase application to the Historic Preservation Office to include in the Capitol Hill Historic District the area south of the freeway, between 7th Street and 11th Street. The new southern boundary will be M Street, SE. This is the second part of a commercial zoning overlay/historic designation "package" designed to assist development along 8th Street and the Barracks Row/Main Street project. The Historic Preservation Office will be evaluating the application, notifying property owners about it, and scheduling a hearing about the designation before the Historic Preservation Review Board.

Much of the information in the application was developed from the historic resources survey recently completed under the auspices of Barracks Row/Main Street with a grant from the Historic Preservation Office. Each building was photographed, building permits and tax records were researched, and information entered in a data base. Of the 55 structures in the boundary increase area, 12 were built between 1800 and 1864. The impact of Navy Yard hiring cycles are even more indicative in 22 structures built between 1887 and 1889, shortly after the Yard had been designated the chief manufacturer of guns for the war ships.

The Capitol Hill Restoration Society financially supported this effort by awarding the first Austin Beale Internship (named in honor of a former Society president) to help with the survey, particularly in the area north of the freeway.

The "philosophical" underpinning of the application is that it is difficult to understand the development of Capitol Hill without including the impact of the growing Navy Yard on commercial development and housing stock.

The practical impetus for the application is the difficulty the Barracks Row Association was facing with only the northern portion of 8th Street contained within the Historic District. Without the commercial zoning overlay, there was concern that fast food establishments would proliferate as workers returned in large numbers to the Navy Yard, and that the area would be overrun by larger office projects. Without historic district protection, properties could be torn down (as two early brick buildings were last year) and new buildings constructed without any design oversight.

With historic district designation, commercial property owners are eligible for tax credits when restoring their buildings. The Historic Preservation Office staff is available for guidance, and the Historic Preservation Review Board can review new construction and help to establish the kind of façade control that is sought by the Barracks Row/Main Street and that increases commercial attractiveness for everyone.

If the boundary increase is approved, the historic district boundary will become what many people believe it should have been originally. In the early 1970s, when the Capitol Hill Historic District was being considered, the proposed boundaries were the Navy Yard-M Street on the south, the Anacostia River on the east, and H Street on the north. Because the city thought this district was too large, it

devised the present boundaries – the freeway on the south, 13th Street (roughly) on the east, and F Street on the north.

The proposed boundary change provides another connection between the Navy Yard and the neighborhood that grew up around it. *

Advice That'll Help Keep You Warm This Winter

by Katie Miller

The next Preservation Café anticipates the coming winter with the topic "Just Right: Thermal Comfort in Capitol Hill Row Houses." Capitol Hill architect Robert Weinstein will be the speaker on Wednesday, November 14 at 6:30 p.m. The popular CHRS event returns to its Caffé Italiano location, at 1129 Pennsylvania Ave. SE.

Weinstein will talk about the built-in thermal assets and liabilities of Capitol Hill's historic houses and how the Victorians lived through Washington's winters and summers. He will also describe the eight determinants of thermal comfort and how to make them work, as well as a few steps to help reduce energy bills and stay comfortable while respecting the home's historic fabric. Weinstein lives and works in Capitol Hill row houses; he says he is "always looking for ways to improve thermal comfort in these drafty old buildings."

KEEP WARM continued on page 3

President's Column

by Rob Nevitt

What a great Saturday it was on October the 12th! Gorgeous weather and such a lot going on around Eighth Street and Eastern Market. "President Lincoln" was in the vicinity, visiting the Open House at the Old Naval hospital at 921 Pennsylvania Ave. A broad range of community groups wants this building to be returned to its former architectural glory and to more useful life. The Barracks Row/Main Street Project and all the tenants from the Navy Yard to Pennsylvania Ave. are part of big plans for a burgeoning commercial street.

On the waves of all that Saturday energy, I reflected on Liz Cheely's article on page 5 of last month's News ("When Capitol Hill was 'Redlined'"). Imagine facing such a fundamental problem as simple financing for a house just because the house lay east of the Capitol! The steep slope faced by those early Restoration Society founders and members was daunting, but they climbed it one step at a time.

I hope others of you with memories of the issues of the fifties, sixties and beyond will send us newsletter articles like this. Our

focus is on restoring the physical part of the hill, but it would be good to hear about the abstractions, the issues, battles won and lost.

Then we have our modern agenda. We set it out at the last membership meeting on a rainy Monday last month to a very small audience. I can say here to the whole membership "we missed you" without excepting many. The slope ahead is still up-hill.

While Eighth Street seems primed to flourish, H Street still struggles. Although it is outside the Historic District, its development is important to the Northern tier of that District. A joint task force of the Stanton Park Neighborhood Association and the CHRS has been working on The Station Place development because it is an important anchor to how that tier develops. In conception, the huge office building proposed turned a cold and glassy back to the houses to the east and provided no invitation for its tenants to venture onto H Street. We have struggled to get changes made in the plans and see progress in the right direction. A building "sympathetic" to what lies to the east can have a lasting impact. You have and will read more about this in the News.

You will also read in this issue about the plans for the Environmental Committee under the new chairmanship of Gene Smith. Her hope is that this activity can be interactive in a way useful to our membership and their neighbors. The same is true of the Society's role in the nuisance property issue, and that it is one that will



be participated in by the many rather than followed by the few.

During conversations with Greg Richey, Dan Daly, and other friends of the Old Navy Hospital, I reflected on the increased interest in John Adams, our second President, and his connection with the neighborhood. He stayed at the original Tunnickliff's Tavern at least twice in 1800 while waiting for proper Presidential quarters to be completed. The Navy Yard was created during his administration. If someone is thinking of a memorial to him, wouldn't Pennsylvania Ave. SE be a good locale? It would be in sight of the Navy Yard, the Adams building of the Library of Congress, and the original site of Tunnickliff's Tavern. This location would also help the Eastern Market Metro stop to become a visitors' destination of consequence, what with shopping, historic Eastern Market, the Old Naval Hospital, and a unique neighborhood nearby.

While it would be wonderful to have other articles like Liz Cheely's on the challenges of the Society's beginnings, there is plenty to do ahead. Share the history with us but also share your thoughts about the future ... and your energy, when plans for advocacy take shape. ✧



The Old Naval Hospital

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To contact any of the above, please contact the Society offices by calling 202/543-0425 or sending email to CapHRS@aol.com.

www.chrs.org

Founded over 40 years ago to preserve and protect Capitol Hill's residential character, the Society is now the largest civic association on Capitol Hill, and one of the largest in the entire District of Columbia. From the beginning, the Society has played a key role in maintaining the diverse, residential character of our neighborhood.

Eighth Street – Past, Present, And Future

by Nancy Metzger, Chair Historic District Committee

Jill Dowling, Executive Director of Barracks Row/Main Street, shared the results of the historic resources survey conducted in the blocks from 7th Street to 11th Street between the freeway and the Navy Yard with approximately 40 Capitol Hill residents who attended the Preservation Café at Sheridan's Steakhouse on October 10. Audience members also expressed great interest in Barracks Row/Main Street's plans for commercial revitalization and façade and streetscape enhancement.

Ms. Dowling's talk was illustrated by slides showing both the present structures and the historic views. It featured information uncovered during an intensive survey conducted by Beth Hannold and Donna Hanousek under a grant awarded by the Historic Preservation Office. One of the interesting glimpses into the past was the store building at 7th and L Streets, built by Julia Pic between 1854 and 1855 as a grocery store. Since our view of 19th-century life often includes images of women staying inside the home, it was fascinating to realize that many were successful businesswomen. Another woman owned the Haines Department Store at 8th and Pennsylvania Avenue, at the other end of 8th Street.



The 1892 Haines Building

Another aspect of the streetscape discussed at the Café was the current research for a 8th Street heritage trail being conducted by Kim Williams under a grant awarded by the D.C. Heritage Tourism Coalition. She will write the copy for signs that will follow the "template" established by the Heritage Tourism Coalition for the downtown and U Street historic trail projects. A history advisory panel will be reviewing the work for accuracy and inclusiveness. Members of the CHRS Historic District Committee are involved on this project and will be working to extend the system throughout Capitol Hill.

Special thanks to Sheridan's Steakhouse for setting aside the downstairs room for the presentation. *

Keep Warm Café continued from page 1

Robert Weinstein is a principal and co-founder of architrave p.c. architects, a Hill firm since 1982. He is past president of the Washington DC Chapter of the Association for Preservation Technology (APT) and is currently on its Board of Directors. He is active in the Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Historic District Committee, where he reviews proposed construction for conformance with the city's preservation law. He is a co-recipient of the 1998 Pro Bono Publico Award from the American Architectural Foundation for his contribution to the Capitol Hill Design Guidelines. He is married to and partners with Judith M. Capen, aka Judith of "ask Judith" in the *Voice of The Hill*.

After the November meeting, Preservation Café will take a holiday

break, returning in February. Topics, speakers, and locations for the 2002 sessions will be announced in January. Suggestions from the audiences are always encouraged.

Preservation Cafés are an adaptation of a Greenwich Village idea in which a speaker talks at a neighborhood restaurant with a small group about topics of particular local interest. They are held the second Wednesday of each month and have an informal format so that the audience can share ideas, reactions, and questions with the speaker. People stop in on the way home from work for relaxation and stimulating discussion with friends and neighbors, sometimes continuing the conversations through dinner. *

Boys Town Ruling Challenged; CHRS donates \$1,000

by Brian Furness

At its October 16 meeting, the CHRS Board voted a contribution of \$1,000 to support an appeal of the Zoning Administrator's decision to issue permits to Girls and Boys Town for four adjoining townhouses to be built on Potomac Ave. SE (at Pennsylvania Ave.). Each townhouse will accommodate six troubled children. By finding that each townhouse is a separate facility, the Zoning Administrator ruled that Boys Town did not have to apply for the special exception required for residential facilities housing seven or more located within 500 feet of an existing community-based residential facility. A group home for the mentally disabled is within 500 feet of Boys Town's proposed facility.

The Southeast Citizens for Smart Development (SCSD), chaired by community activists Will Hill and Ellen Oppen-Weiner, challenged the Zoning Administrator's decision, arguing that Boys Town's proposal is really a single project and thus subject to the special exception requirement. The Board of Zoning Adjustment has scheduled a hearing on the issue for December 4.

SCSD has retained well-known environmental/land use attorney Andrea Ferster to handle the appeal. If SCSD wins, Boys Town will have to apply for a special exception to build the facility. The resulting hearing would provide Boys Town's opponents (including CHRS) with an opportunity to present arguments on why the site is inappropriate for the proposed facility.

Still pending is Boys Town's lawsuit against elected and appointed officials, and against Hill and Oppen-Weiner as individuals and as officers in SCSD and other organizations. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and Center for Individual Rights will provide legal representation *pro bono*. However, SCSD still needs to cover the cost of depositions, filing fees, copying, transcripts, and

other direct legal expenses. The ACLU has asked for \$5,000 up front to cover these expenses.

The SCSD hopes to raise at least \$25,000 to support both its defense against the Boys Town lawsuit and its challenge to city zoning authorities. A recent fundraiser, endorsed by most of the members of the City Council, started the ball rolling. Other fund raising events are planned, including the auction of a painting donated by Michelle Taylor, who has also offered to host a fundraiser at her gallery Taylor and Sons Fine Arts on Pennsylvania Ave. SE. Other Capitol Hill artists, including Stevens Carter and Jan Kern, are also contributing paintings to help support SCSD's legal challenges.

Councilmember Sharon Ambrose (Ward 6), one of the public officials named in Boys Town's suit, has introduced legislation providing sanctions against "SLAPP suits" or strategic lawsuits against public

SCSD Legal Fund

Donations to the SCSD Legal Fund should be sent to Kathleen Donner, Director, 18 3rd St. NE, Washington, DC 20002.

Call (202) 543-3063 for more information.

participation. The draft bill, sent to the Council's Judiciary Committee, would make it easier for judges to dismiss lawsuits apparently designed primarily to intimidate community activists and organizations from expressing their First Amendment rights and from petitioning their public and appointed officials. The bill, modeled on California legislation, would provide monetary penalties for frivolous actions. *

A Splendid Team Coming Together for 2002 House Tour

by T.C. Benson, House Tour Co-chair

Tour Chair Michelle Carroll has made great progress in putting together the team for the 2002 tour. Diane Shages is heading up the house selection committee, Brian Furness has agreed to chair transportation, John Shages will work the ticket sales, Marilyn Kaufman will once again do the graphic design work, and Pat Lally will write the brochure. The Saturday reception committee is headed by Chris Alvear, head of Alvear Studios and retail and restaurant chair of CHAMPS (The Capitol Hill Association of Merchants and Professionals).

The Old Naval Hospital on Pennsylvania Avenue will again be on the tour, and will also be the site for the Saturday reception - with its rooms decorated by the "Second Saturday" Galleries. Hill restaurants are being solicited to contribute food and beverages for a "Taste of the Hill"-style event. The new café (opening soon) at Results the Gym will be the site for the Sunday tea.

CHAW (Capitol Hill Arts Workshop) will be open during the tour, with an exhibit in its gallery and some activity in the theater. The Corner Store Gallery (at South Carolina and 9th) has agreed to host a children's art contest that will be on display at the Naval Hospital.

Many new volunteers have stepped forward, but many more are welcome! *

CHRS Goes World Wide

by Bernadette McMahon

“Yahoo! (... and I don’t mean the website, either). We are live!”

Those exultant words, in CHRS Webmaster Scott Morton’s October 5 email, signaled the birth of the long-awaited Society website, <http://www.chrs.org>. Kudos to Scott for pulling this off!

The website lets everyone know about the Society’s activities and publications. Its calendar lists Society activities, but is also available for publicizing other events of interest to members and the Capitol Hill community. Society business documents, testimonies, resolutions, proposed by-law changes, and budgets will be posted in the future. Members are urged to visit the website and to contribute additional material for posting or suggest ideas for other uses.

The Communications Committee recently developed protocols to facilitate smooth operation of the site without undue burden on the Webmaster. These are summarized below.

Calendar Items

CHRS-sponsored events will be posted by the Webmaster. Any visitor to the site can submit other non-commercial calendar entries via the links available; directions are provided on what details to include. Unlike some sites, however, posting of submitted items is *not* automatic. Instead, the information will arrive as email to the Webmaster (or his designee), who will attempt to post items within a day of receipt. Because this timing can’t be guaranteed, items should be submitted at least three days in advance of when the posting is desired (*not* three days in advance of the event). The Webmaster may consult a Society officer or appropriate committee chair if uncertain of the appropriateness of any item. CHRS reserves the right to make the final decision about posting calendar items.



One important note: if you’re sending an item with a deadline to the Webmaster, be sure to check the “Posting Status” on the “Details” page. We’ll be using that area to inform users of Webmaster vacations, substitute Webmaster, etc.

Non-calendar Items

CHRS committee chairs and officers have been charged with oversight for material submitted for use on the website. Items already approved by the CHRS Board, previously published by CHRS, and/or officially presented on behalf of CHRS will be posted without further review. Material not in those categories should be submitted via an appropriate officer or committee chair (listed on the site) for approval and forwarding to the Webmaster.

Material submitted directly to the Webmaster without prior approval will be delayed while approval is sought.

Short items (less than one-quarter page in length) may be submitted in the message area of an email if necessary, but longer items should be submitted as MS Word documents attached to an email message. The originator should use formatting (various fonts,

styles, indentations, etc.) only to indicate emphasis and organization. The Webmaster will convert the document to the format required on a website.

Approved and formatted material should be submitted at least seven days in advance of the date that the posting is desired. Approved material that requires additional formatting should be submitted at least ten days in advance.

Material already approved, officially presented, and/or published will not be edited for content or style, unless an egregious error is noted. Other material may be minimally edited, but the burden for appropriate content and style rests with the officer or committee chair who submits the item to the Webmaster. ✱

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Michael A. Conley & Mark S. Krikstan
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Dana & Walt Lukken
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Public Safety on Capitol Hill Since September 11

by Kim Stevens, Chair, Public Safety Committee

When Rob Nevitt asked me a few months ago to replace him as the chair of the Public Safety Committee, we all lived in a different world. Before September 11, our public safety concerns focused on finding a parking space when we came home late at night and making it safely to our front doors. We still have those same concerns, but suddenly they seem less central to our lives.

We on Capitol Hill enjoy proximity to the magnificent building that gives our neighborhood its name. We also have a close-up view of the rather extensive defensive measures being taken to preserve that building for our progeny and to keep those who work there from danger. Whatever happens to the Capitol or in defense of the Capitol will have a major impact on our respective lives as Capitol Hill residents.

What we always thought of as necessary process has been a victim of these federal efforts in defense of the Capitol. We can see up close the joke that DC home rule becomes in times of crisis, and see the arrogance with which federal entities act, without advice or consultation, in what we consider to be our backyards. Still, it is refreshing to see that the Federal government can get its act together when it needs to, even if that act tramples a bit on what in normal times would have been considered our prerogatives.

Unintended benefits

Some may view the federal focus on the defense of the area around the Capitol complex as bringing to our neighborhood some collateral gains. Streets in the Historic District now have to suffer a much lesser load of truck traffic following the closure to heavy vehicles of the two main arteries that move traffic past the Capitol. The tour bus issue has all but vanished, and vehicle traffic on the major avenues is obviously lighter. The impact of tourist parking on our residential streets is lessened, and the basic concepts behind a Capitol Visitors Center may be (and ought to be) re-examined. While making our way around the Hill by car is more difficult with impromptu and seemingly permanent street closures, pedestrian access to open areas of public sites has not been impeded, making Capitol Hill an even "greener" and pedestrian-friendly place in which to live.

While some might consider themselves to be under higher risk living only blocks away from the site of a

major bio-terrorist attack, it remains that the greatest risks to our health and longevity still remain being out on the streets alone after dark. Now if only Boys Town would feel frightened and change their plans for building here!

Old threats remain

Our thoughts may have drifted away for a while from some of the petty annoyances of urban life, but those annoyances have not vanished. While it would seem to be logical for the would-be criminal to think that this is not the time to wander around the Hill carrying a firearm or latex gloves, such logical reasoning does not often penetrate the minds of the criminals who prey upon us. We must become alert to the new threats of life in Washington, but remain aware of the old ones as well.

It is not heretical to wonder (even if perhaps not politically correct to say) that we might be even less able in the future to count on the MPD to protect us from these more traditional dangers. Not that our beloved and respected First District cops would not want to patrol our streets, but they have other and more pressing priorities as well. Finite resources stretch only so far.

Now as in the past, it remains true that the best defense against being a victim of crime is to be aware that there is a potential danger out there, and to live constantly in a state of awareness of what is going on around you.

Threats to your vehicle

"Theft from Auto" continues to be a major headache for us. If there is nothing in your car, nothing can be stolen from it. Make sure everything is removed from the inside every night, so your car looks from the outside to be squeaky-clean. Hiding your cell phone in the glove compartment while leaving the charger in the cigarette lighter gives a message you do not want to give. We are approaching the point, common elsewhere in the world, where it may be wiser to leave the glove box door open at night while parked just to show there is nothing inside it. Remember that the person who commits theft from auto is making an unconscious cost/benefit analysis in front of every car, including yours. Unless you are asking to be a victim, you had better make it obvious that the benefit to the thief will be zero.

...and to your other belongings

At home, there is not much you can do other than dial 911 if someone is breaking in knowing that you are inside, but that is not one of the more likely scenarios. Much more likely is the snatch and grab. Your purse cannot be stolen from the chair by the front window if the front door is locked — all the time. Even with the door locked, it is better to find another place to put that purse, where it cannot be seen by anyone on the street.

While you are on the street yourself, put your Rolex out of sight somewhere, and put your gold jewelry in the same place (not on your ears, neck, and wrists. If at all possible, leave your purse at home. It is not that we cannot have and should not wear these fine things, just that there are inappropriate places to do so; among those inappropriate places are the streets of any large city, including Washington. As we head into the holiday season, this becomes especially important.

Abroad and at home

It has become commonplace now to observe that the whole paradigm has changed since September 11. We are at war, and expect it to be a longish and complex war we did not seek, against an enemy who for the first time since 1861 is capable of striking at Washington, and for the first time since 1814 has actually done so. The dangers of living in today's world have been brought much closer to home, while at the same time the daily news and our attention are more directed abroad. We are, collectively and often individually, feeling stressed, depressed, fearful, defiant, and pensive. We have gone through our Pearl Harbor right here; we are beginning to realize that we have survived only the first rounds, and wonder what will come next.

Between the dramatic events of the recent past and the dramatic events yet to come, we must lead our normal daily lives. They will be filled with some new hassles we did not expect and would rather be without. We need to become aware and remain aware of the much less dramatic but equally real dangers that we face as residents of Capitol Hill. We are unlikely to be able to suppress those dangers much, but we can become more effective at avoiding them. So doing will give us the peace of mind to enjoy the splendors of life brought to us each day here in our Nation's Capitol, and especially to the residents of our very special neighborhood. ✧

New Environment Committee Chair

As readers saw in the last newsletter, Gene Smith has agreed to Chair the Environment Committee. Because she had to be away in recent weeks, she and I haven't had a chance to discuss the job, although she took time from a truly distracting schedule to write to me about it. I want to share her letter with you, the membership, because it raises the really basic question of what is "environment" when we make it the subject of a committee. Tree planting and pocket parks is obvious. But what about street lights that are out, overgrown yards, or trash at Metro stations? Isn't everything environment? And, being so, doesn't it overlap many city offices and the work of the chairs of other CHRS committees?

Well, we can work that out. What I like most about Gene's approach is that she, for CHRS, becomes a point of contact to the membership for action. That is what we are here for, to pursue a common agenda. So read the following paragraphs, take up Gene's challenge and let us know what you think this committee should concentrate on. Oh yes, and volunteer to help!

— Rob Nevitt

A Message from the New Chair

I want to be a point of contact for people on the Hill with problems that involve trash, upkeep of buildings, zoning compliance, or other regulatory compliance.

I have lived on Capitol Hill off and on for the last 13 years, and I believe that the Hill offers a quality of life and amenities that surpass or rival any neighborhood in the District. We have mass transit (bus and Metro), choices of houses (from small low-maintenance condos to large townhouses), to restaurants, bookstores, and other retail outlets. We know our neighbors, and we rely on them to look out for us while we look out for others. We just need to work together to determine what the problems are and how we can tackle and address them.

Serious problems like crime are made worse by poorly maintained street lighting and neglected properties. The appropriate agency has to be advised, and perhaps absent landlords or owners need to be informed. Communication with an identifiable human being (government official, police officer, or owner) is often the first step to resolution of a problem.

If you see a problem that needs to be addressed in our immediate vicinity or elsewhere on the Hill, drop me a line at gmsmith@smithbrandon.com. To lessen any concern over privacy issues, all communications will be undertaken in the name of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society.

I look forward to hearing from you, to figuring out where we can help, and to resolving some issues that only get worse if they're not fixed. ✧

— Gene Smith, Environmental Committee Chair

Signs, Signs, And More Signs

by Nancy Metzger

For those who are directionally challenged, three city signage projects are underway. The following is offered as a roadmap for those who like to keep things straight.

• *Wayfinding Signs* — These are the blue signs now installed on street corners near the Capitol and Union Station as well as downtown. Some are oriented to pedestrians and others are vehicular. Signs will be installed at Metro stations as well. At the city's request, the Downtown Business Improvement District is overseeing the extension of this new system into the city's neighborhoods. A group met last month to start the process on Capitol Hill. Louise Ware (661-7584) is coordinating the effort.

• *Historic District, Landmarks and Sites* — With a grant from the Historic Preservation Office, The D.C. Heritage Tourism Coalition is developing prototype signs to mark historic districts and individual landmarks and sites in the city. A community meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 7 at 6:30 p.m. to solicit views on what the signs should look like and the criteria that should be developed to guide their installation. Contact Rick Busch (661-7568) if you would like to attend

(Charles Sumner School, 17th and M Streets NW).

• *Heritage Trail* — The D.C. Heritage Tourism Coalition is also working with neighborhoods to develop heritage trails which present D.C.'s history. (Check out the signs downtown and in the U Street neighborhood.) These trails are part of the city's effort to lure tourists off the Mall. The first Capitol Hill trail will be along 8th Street, S.E. but it should link up with two other trails on Capitol Hill. Contact Nancy Metzger (543-0425) about this system.

Although not strictly a signage program, the call box project will be coordinated with these other programs so that Capitol Hill is not a sea of signs. Members of the CHRS Historic District Committee are attending meetings about all these signage efforts. If you would like more information or would like to participate, contact Nancy Metzger through the CHRS office (543-0425). ✧

Capitol Hill Call Boxes

Capitol Hill call boxes are street-corner reminders of a time before homes had telephones, and when calls for emergency help went out by this city-wide system. Many are due for a makeover in the coming months and years. Before that happens, we're recording what some of them look like today.

The call box shown on the right stands on the SE corner of East Capitol and 2nd Street. The inset photo is of a box at Fifth and G, SE.



Looking Back on Capitol Hill

by Nancy Metzger

Memoirs are the written form of oral history and the late J. George Butler's *Simpler Times: Stories of Early Twentieth Century City Life* captures many scenes of life on Capitol Hill during the first two decades of the last century. Butler grew up on Second Street, in the block now occupied by the Madison building of the Library of Congress.

One short anecdote illustrates the seriousness with which the city enforced the parking laws, particularly in the public space between sidewalk and building line: "As careful a driver as he was, Dad didn't escape the clutches of the law. In Washington he was arrested for parking beyond the building line at 10th and G Streets on October 1, 1924. He wrote [in his diary, the basis for much of the memoir], "I went to a lot of trouble to get excused, but in vain, so at First Precinct, I left \$2.00 collateral."

Another anecdote indicates the trouble the city had in keeping up with the changing automobile technology: "The speed limit in Washington was 12 miles an hour. Strangely enough, the speed limit was enforced by policemen on bicycles. What a scene it was – a policeman in full uniform bending over the handlebars of his single-speed bike "scorching," to try and catch a speeder doing 15 miles an hour."

Copies of the book can be obtained from the Historical Society of Washington or from Vandamere Press (with credit card, 1-800-551-7776). ✧

A Big Disappointment: Cosmetic Changes Lead to Partial CFA Reversal on Station Place “Eyesore”

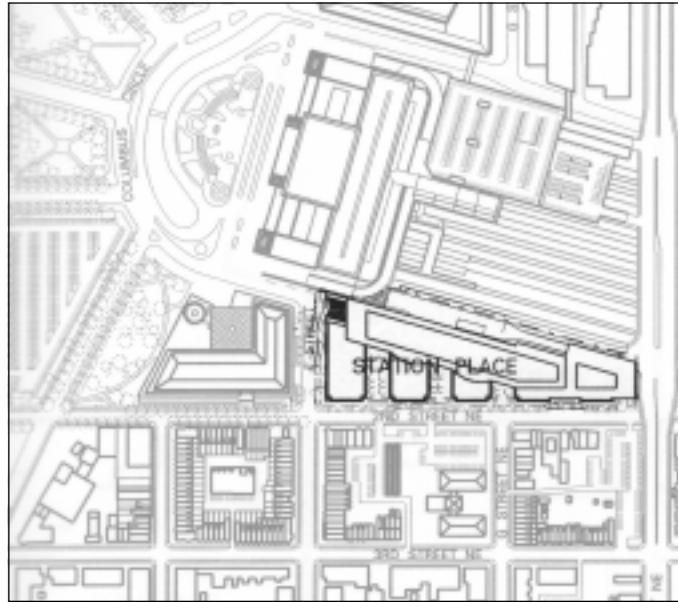
by Charles W. McMillion

In a move that surprised and disappointed the CHRS Task Force on Station Place, the Commission of Fine Arts approved a large portion of the revised design concept by the Louis Dreyfus Property Group at a re-hearing on October 18. Notwithstanding its \$400-million 14-year lease for 650,000 square feet with the Securities and Exchange Commission, the developer suggested it might walk away from the site (and that the SEC might leave the District) unless it is permitted to build 1.5 million square feet of all-office space — more than twice the size of the SEC offices.

A few people in our community have swallowed this (understandable) bluff. But with the help of several local developers, the Task Force calculated that by itself the guaranteed lease from the SEC would allow the developer to amortize the entire Station Place land purchase, build and operate the SEC building, and still make a very healthy annual profit. It is just not credible to imagine the Dreyfus Group walking away from this golden lease agreement.

At the first hearing on September 20, CFA Chairman J. Carter Brown characterized the Kevin Roche design as “an eyesore” and the scale of the building as a “beached whale.” He added “... it really just seems like too much building for that site, either from height or bulk or setback or however you mitigate it. Cosmetics on the outside are not going to solve it. It’s just too much.”

In revising their plans for the October CFA re-hearing, Dreyfus trimmed only 20,000 square feet off the original plan — 1.3% of the space — by moving the second of five wings 20 feet in from the property line on 2nd Street NE. The remainder of the building is still built to the property line, broken up as before only with small “smokers’ courtyards” to provide tenants with windows. Rather than eliminating “a floor or two” from the 10-story building as the CFA had suggested, Dreyfus merely reduced mechanicals atop the building’s penthouses by seven and a half feet.



The Station Place site for the 1.5-million square foot and almost all-glass office building is along the east side of Union Station, bordering the Capitol Grounds, and adjacent to the northwest corner of the Historic District.

The revised plan does call for a stone facade on the second (slightly setback) wing. This provides a hint of the possibilities being urged by the Task Force to break up the building’s lifeless and suburban-style 933-foot glass wall. The only other substantive changes to the earlier plans are a revised design for the Securities and Exchange entrance (visible from Columbus Circle) and the suggestion of a very small pedestrian entrance on H Street.

Task Force team leaders and representatives of the Stanton Park Neighborhood Association (SPNA) met with the Dreyfus team on October 11 to review and discuss the revised plans. Members of the Task Force’s Design and Scale Team then met on October 15 to more thoroughly examine and discuss the revisions. The conclusion reached at both meetings was unanimous: though the design was edging in the right direction, far more dramatic changes were needed. Team members continue to feel very strongly that the 2nd Street facade should respect the consistent 64-foot setback from the curb that is established on the Capitol Grounds to the south and the Railway Express building to the north.

From the outset of the October 18 hearing, the CFA (and Chairman Brown in particular) seemed determined to approve the project. Following architect

Kevin Roche’s presentation of his revised plans, a couple of emotional pleas were heard for neighborhood development. Then CHRS Task Force leaders Nancy Metzger and Russell Sturm pointed out that the purpose of the hearing was to assess the Dreyfus response to the strong concerns raised by the CFA Commissioners at the September hearing. Nancy and Russell did an outstanding job detailing the yawning gaps between each of these specific concerns and the minimal or cosmetic revisions that had been undertaken by the developer.

However, little seemed to matter except, in the end, the CFA still could not bring itself to approve the entire monotonous, two-block long expanse of building. The commissioners therefore agreed to approve the first three of the planned five wings and to postpone consideration of the rest to some undetermined future time.

This partial CFA approval presents an unusual situation for the DC Zoning Commission, which opens its hearing on the Station Place proposal on November 8. The CHRS Task Force, SPNA, and other interested groups and individuals are scheduled to testify in what promises to be another important chapter in Capitol Hill history. ✱

Mark your Calendar!

NOVEMBER

7 Wednesday, 6:30 p.m.

Community meeting, The D.C. Heritage Tourism Coalition, to solicit views on signs to mark historic districts, individual landmarks and sites. Charles Sumner School, 17th and M Sts NW. Contact Rick Busch (661-7568) if you plan to attend

8 Thursday, 7:00 p.m.

Zoning Commission hearing on Station Place, One Judiciary Square (441 4th St. NW)

8 Thursday, 6:30 p.m.

Presentation on the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative by DC Planning Director Andrew Altman and the AWI consultant team, National Building Museum, 401 F Street NW. Free; registration not required.

14 Wednesday, 6:30 p.m.

Preservation Café: "Just Right: Thermal Comfort in Capitol Hill Row Houses." Speaker is Robert Weinstein, principal and co-founder of architrave p.c. architects, a Capitol Hill firm since 1982. Upstairs, Caffé Italiano, 1129 Pennsylvania Ave. SE.

20 Tuesday, 6:30 p.m.

CHRS Board Meeting, Old Naval Hospital, 921 Pennsylvania Ave. SE

DECEMBER

4 Tuesday, 1:00 p.m.

Zoning Administrator's hearing on the Boys Town project, One Judiciary Square, 441 4th St. NW

The Future of the Old Naval Hospital

by Barbara Eck, Chair, Old Naval Hospital Committee

Now that the city has accepted the offer to build a mayoral mansion on Foxhall Road and the Old Naval Hospital is out of the running, the groups concerned with the fate of the historic building on 921 Pennsylvania Avenue are focusing on other uses for the property. The CHRS Old Naval Hospital Committee has been in touch with representatives of each of these groups, as well as Council member Sharon Ambrose and ANC chair Ken Jarboe.

Friends of the Naval Hospital want to see the building restored and maintained as an asset to the community. The Naval Medical Museum group would like to see the building restored as a Naval Hospital Museum. The CHAMPS Foundation has voted to explore the possibility of spearheading a campaign to raise the funds for restoration.

The CHRS is primarily concerned with seeing that the structural damage to the property is repaired as soon as possible and that a comprehensive plan to restore the building to its original magnificence



The South entrance of the Old Naval Hospital

is developed. There are other important objectives: the building needs to serve the community's needs, and an ongoing source of funding to maintain the site must be clearly identified.

Anyone interested in serving on the CHRS Old Naval Hospital Committee should contact me at BARB539@JUNO.com or call 544-0840. *

Capitol Hill Restoration Society
420 Tenth Street
Washington, DC 20003