



NEWS

www.chrs.org

May 2002

A Sneak Preview of the 45th Annual CHRS House Tour

Stunning gardens, art, antiques, fabulous kitchens, skylights, and multi-levels of living space are among the features of the eight houses on this year's House and Garden Tour, to be held on Mother's Day weekend, May 11-12.

A candlelight tour of spectacular Capitol Hill homes is scheduled from 5 to 8 pm on Saturday, May 11. Ticket holders are in for a special treat that evening, from 6 to 8 pm, when a reception at the Old Naval Hospital (921 Pennsylvania Ave. SE) offers art, food, and entertainment: a veritable feast for your senses! Not only are four Capitol Hill art galleries showcasing eight local artists on the walls of each room of the historic building, but you'll sample a "A Taste of the Hill," contributed by a good cross section of our neighborhood restaurants.

Planned entertainment includes a portion of the Navy Band. And there's more... Councilmember Sharon Ambrose will be there, along with many Capitol Hill residents you'd like to meet. You'll have a chance to see this important historic building looking better than it has in ages, thanks to Ginkgo Garden's generous donation of landscaping and the dedicated efforts of volunteers who have painted and spruced up.

The house tour continues on Sunday, May 12th, from noon to 5 pm. The Sunday tea is offered at Results the Gym (315 G Street SE) from 4 to 6 pm. You're invited to admire the spectacular renovation of an abandoned school property, and to take a gander at all the fancy equipment that's available for the use of members of this snazzy fitness club.

Tickets, good for both Saturday and Sunday and the receptions, are \$25 if purchased in advance. They cost \$30 on the days of the tour, and are available at a ticket kiosk at Eastern Market on weekends, through May 11. Some Capitol Hill real estate offices and businesses are also selling tickets.

19-21 Gessford Court SE

David Weiner and Rebecca Adamson

David Weiner bought No. 19 five years ago after living in No. 21 Gessford Court for nineteen years. Architect Mark McInturff's design to combine the two houses won a 2000



1016 South Carolina Avenue SE

Washingtonian Residential Design Award and was featured on the Home & Garden TV show. The architect created a large atrium, dividing the first floor from the second with the visual image of a platform suspended in the new space. A simple staircase of unstained fir ascends from asymmetrical landings to connect the two levels. Canary yellow laminate cabinets and cobalt blue floor tiles are set against fire slate countertops in the kitchen. The adjacent hall balcony overlooks McInturff's dramatic atrium, through a new opening in what was once the party wall between the original houses. A loft staircase handcrafted from a modified I-beam and pine risers leads to a rooftop den, one paneled in barn siding and furnished in Mission and

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President's Column

by Robert Nevitt

As usual at this time of year, I revel in the beauty of spring, but I also grow anxious as board and committee members marshal the platoons of volunteers needed to make the annual CHRS House and Garden Tour a success.

Our 45th annual tour is an extraordinary testament to the capacities of Capitol Hill residents to organize and run a complicated enterprise that has no employees and very little in the way of a budget! Since you can read more about the Tour elsewhere in the *News*, I'll segue into a discussion of a closely related subject: money.

The House Tour is the major revenue generator for the CHRS. It allows us to maintain an endowment, meet administrative expenses, and offer grants to other Hill organizations who need cash infusions to paint, plant, or fix up resources that serve the community at large. CHAW, Trees for Capitol Hill, and others have received these grants, which together represent twenty percent of the net revenues for the House tour.

In order to support neighbors who are trying to get a liquor store to regulate itself, we can (and do) provide significant help from our treasury. At such times, we want to know whether there is broad support for the issue, whether other fund sources have been tapped, and whether there are clear goals and a case to be made.

During the course of the year, we have found ourselves involved with a number of issues that entail cost. These have included (among many others), the Station Place Task Force, Boys' Town, liquor license issues, and the restoration of the Old

Naval Hospital at 921 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE.

Some of these issues involve hearings and adversarial proceedings, which means, inevitably, lawyers. Lawyers cost money, though usually we can find a public-spirited one who will take up our issue for a low rate. He or she will likely be up against a veritable phalanx of lawyers speaking for the other well-heeled side, such as the Dreyfus Development Corporation or Boys' Town.

One might hope that reasonableness would prevail. By seeking separate approvals for buildings on contiguous plots that are designed for the same common purpose, it hardly seems possible that Boys' Town is doing anything but coming up with a device for avoiding the more difficult approval process for the project as a whole. Case closed.

Ah, for those few as naive as I, that isn't how it works. Instead, it's a clash of lawyerly arguments, precedents, and parsing of words and phrases. The phalanx arrives with cases full of data, while we do our best to support our case with volunteer, spare-time work in support of our lawyer. It is all we can afford.

Aside from the House Tour revenues and our modest membership dues, we have not pursued other fund raising. I wonder whether we should, to give us more equal standing at these hearings.

This is a test of the waters with those of you who read this column and who might respond: Should we carry-out a solicitation for funds when something large-scale like Boys' Town or Station Place becomes fixed on our radar?

In these cases, affected neighbors prove willing to make contribu-



tions. More than sixty devoted volunteers worked to bring about changes to the design of Station Place, with no small success.

But money was required and ours was the inevitable show string.

Shouldn't we be able to identify people with deeper pockets who might want us to succeed in selected cases?

Of course, finding out where those pockets may be and going through the hoops to gain access to them will require some volunteers. We may reach out to you to help. What do you think the response will be?

* * * *

A note of correction with respect to last month's column: I blurred the lines of two separate actions with respect to St. Coletta's School and the prospect of a new building on Reservation 13.

The DC Appropriations bill did include money for the school to expand into a DC-based facility, in order to serve the high percentage of DC residents among its clients. The specific commitment of a plot in Reservation 13 for this purpose was made by the District of Columbia. ✧

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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.

Mayor Introduces Eastern Market Manager; Comments Refine Design for a New Farmers' Shed

by Brian Furness, Chair, Community Development

At a well-attended April 11 reception at Eastern Market, Mayor Anthony Williams introduced Market managers Stuart Smith and Bruce Cook to the community—a ceremonial laying on of hands that affirmed the City's support for the new management entity. Organized by the Eastern Market Community Advisory Committee (EMCAC), the gathering was emceed by EMCAC Chair Ellen Oppen-Weiner. Ward 6 Councilmember Sharon Ambrose (who introduced the legislation in 1999 that reformed Eastern Market's management structure) registered her support for continued progress in both the management and renovation areas. Councilmembers Brazil and Mendelson also attended the ceremony.

Management Reform

The new management has concentrated on long overdue maintenance and renovation issues, and on reforming lease and tenure arrangements. The new rent structure, for instance, reduced payments for over half the merchants. The new management also negotiated more favorable contracts for trash disposal and other basic services—even the ATM provider now pays more rent to sustain the Market.

Smith's professional property management experience is also paying off on the maintenance and renovation side. The toilets have been redone to commercial standards and are now better maintained. A parking atten-

dant brings improved discipline on the weekend, but parking remains a sore issue.

Full management reform is still hampered by Market Five Gallery's legal action that challenges the City's efforts—as called for in the legislation—to bring all Market functions under the control of one management. The schedule for deciding the case is unclear, but it could well drag on for some time.

Shed Designs

In the meantime, the City's architects are continuing to refine the design for a new farmers' shed, based on community comments on the models displayed at 666 Pennsylvania Ave. SE and at the April 11 reception. Heery International will prepare final "concept" drawings for presentation to the public in May. EMCAC's Capital Improvements Subcommittee, chaired by Monte Edwards, has led the public comment process.

Comments thus far favor a design similar to the present shed, but with filigree ironwork together with ambient lighting from the hip roof along the crown that gives it a lighter appearance. In this design, the roof of the new shed echoes the roof arrangement of the main Market building.

Most commentators favored a break in the shed in order to create an entrance to the Market that is not obscured by the shed. In this case, some—but not all—support extending the shed farther along 7th Street in order to provide the same amount of sheltered vending space as there is at present. *

Communications Committee in Need of Help

Are you a new member who is wondering what this Society does, beyond putting on a fabulous House Tour once a year? Or are you a longtime CHRS member who's never done anything beyond paying annual dues? Maybe you'd like to get more involved. If so, we suggest you join us in preparing the monthly *News*. Besides making a valuable contribution, working on the *News* will permit you to learn about all the efforts the Society makes in such areas as zoning, historic preservation, and city planning. We're in immediate need of help in preparing the final layout and in writing special articles. Get involved today by contacting Communications Committee Chair Bernadette McMahon, bcmahon@his.com.

CHRS House Tour's 45th Year

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Eastlake pieces. The outdoor deck is a McInturff masterpiece of four sculptural pylons that incorporate landscaping and lighting with built-in benches. The focal point is a mobile the architect created from unused building elements.

1016 South Carolina Avenue SE *Brad Hiltcher*

This is the second of Brad Hiltcher's homes to be selected for the house tour in as many years — a compliment to his clever use of lighting, accents, and interior design details. His 1890s house is filled with a collection of fine furnishings from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. These include an array of antique timepieces—most in working order—along with Russian religious icons interspersed throughout the house. The second floor features an entertainment center with an 1880s burl walnut, barrel-front secretary. The entire third floor, with arched windows and balcony, is a master suite and library. It features a massive chandelier acquired from an Episcopal church, a Chesterfield sofa, and an antique leopard pelt. The roof deck offers a magnificent view of the Capitol.

517 East Capitol Street SE *Zorita and Richard Simunek*

The restoration of this 1872 house retained a great deal of its original



19-21 Gessford Court SE

woodwork and architectural details. Its lofty twelve-foot ceilings are still adorned with original plaster medallions, and the original walnut and chestnut staircase retains its pine paneling in the stair hall. All of the pine wainscoting is original to the house, as are the bead board ceiling and the brick hearth in the kitchen. Exposed black radiator mains and antique painted glass shop windows are other kitchen highlights. The master bedroom was created out of two rooms in the rear of the house. The former "trunk room" is now a bathroom fitted with antique fixtures — notably a rare 1880s zinc and oak tub.

636 A Street SE *Pamela Jones*

Pamela Jones is a member of the Victorian Society. Not surprisingly, her house is filled with the Victorian furniture she has collected over 20 years. Jones said entering her house "is kind of like walking back in time." This will be even more true during the tour, as its guides will be dressed in Victorian garb. After purchasing the house last year, Jones launched a nine-month renovation which included removing the first floor kitchen and moving it back to its original basement location. Hill craftsman David Bernhardt recreated a new mahogany and vintage pine staircase to the restored basement. The first floor features a music room—complete with player piano and Victrola. A rare 1892 Currier and Ives print entitled "Tree of Life" hangs above the principal fireplace, one of five in the house.

800 A Street SE *Heather and Steve Tourkin*

This is the third home the Tourkins have purchased on the Hill, in their quest for more space, light, and proximity to neighborhood amenities. Their extensive collection of art and artifacts, acquired during travels abroad, are presented in rooms with twelve-foot ceilings, deeply coved cornices, and south- and west-facing windows which all have their original



517 East Capitol Street SE

raised-panel shutters. In the dining room is a monumental work by Canadian architect and artist Paul Sloughet, which was recently on loan to the Bayly Art Museum at the University of Virginia. The Tourkin's son occupies a colorful upstairs bedroom with an original second-story open porch. Their daughter's "pink" room features furniture lyrically painted by a Folger Theatre scenic designer, as well as an intricately crafted Queen Anne-style dollhouse.

617 C Street NE *Jeannie and Christopher Rhee*

The Rhees have a love for Romanian-trained international artist Manuela Holban, whose work depicting Aphrodite in "Cytheria" (the Isle of Love) is the focal point of their living room. The kitchen, which opens onto a small patio, has fruitwood cabinets and countertops made of green granite. A counter-level fireplace with a chestnut surround and slate hearth is the centerpiece of the room. The main staircase is naturally illuminated with a Queen Anne style skylight that holds a clever assortment of late nineteenth-

century colored, patterned, and textured glass. There are skylights in every room of the second floor, including a dramatic stained glass ceiling in the front bedroom over the antique brass bed. Though most of the original interior architectural features of this 1899 rowhouse were lost after it was subdivided into a multifamily dwelling, most of the original heart pine flooring survived.

1367 North Carolina Avenue NE

Ronald Mace and Timothy Vojtako

This house, bordering a park, has an unusual sense of openness. The living room fireplace has a gas-fired coal grate, trimmed with H&R Johnson Minton tiles and surrounded by an expertly refinished Eastlake-style mantel. Monumental early 20th century stained glass windows salvaged from elsewhere define the dining room, and opalescent "art" glass paneled doors on the kitchen cabinets reinforce the visual and practical connection between both spaces. Upstairs, the owners selected a brilliant green for the front bedroom, where hangs the oil-on-canvas "North Truro Farm" by Cape Cod artist Michael E. Davis. The twin tripartite stained glass windows illuminate the master bathroom and its brilliant marble finishes.

511 Seventh Street SE

Carol Blakeslee and Jimm Collin

This 1890s flat-front rowhouse was one of four built by the same developer. Two years ago, local architect Matt Ossolinski was commissioned to open up its vestibule, widen first-floor doorways, add crisper woodwork details, and create a small addition. He modified the old dining room window into a doorway leading to an enclosed areaway between the ell and the neighboring property; the resulting "greenhouse" provides garden views and floods the work area below with natural light. All of the original pine flooring was refinished, and signature Ossolinski bookcases were custom-built in the alcoves flanking the nineteenth century fireplace mantel. Many fine pieces of art are displayed, including works by award-winning French artist Bernard Gantner and Dominican contemporary artist Antonio Carrero. On the landing of the spiral staircase hangs a Muslim prayer board depicting traditional African symbols by one of Nigeria's most prolific artists, Victor Ekpuk. The kitchen cabinets were refaced with clear maple doors and stainless hardware that compliment a cork floor and dramatic countertops of black granite.

House and Garden Tour Houses 2002

511 7th Street, SE
517 East Capitol Street, SE
636 A Street, SE
19-21 Gessford Court, SE
1367 North Carolina Avenue, NE
617 C Street, NE
800 A Street, SE
1016 South Carolina Avenue, SE

SCHEDULE

Saturday:

Candlelight House Tour: 5–8 pm
Welcome Reception: 6–8 pm at
the Old Naval Hospital

Sunday

Mother's Day Tour: noon–5 pm
Tea: 4–6 pm at Results The Gym

* * * *

Capitol Hill galleries and shops are also celebrating "Second Saturday" on May 11th with special exhibits and events, music and refreshments. The Capitol Hill Arts Workshop at 545 7th Street SE will be open for tours and features an "Art on the Hill" show of work by its students. ✧

Preservation Café Reveals Secret of Good Urban Gardens – Really Good Soil

by Nancy Metzger

Going beyond the usual landscape focus of colorful flowers and beautiful trees, Doug Delano, certified horticulturist, long-time Capitol Hill resident, and speaker at April's Preservation Café, noted that the key to a successful urban garden is really basic—good dirt. Get rid of the red clay typical of Capitol Hill by incorporating soil amendments. One of his favorites is "pine fines" which take less time to decompose than pine nuggets or double shredded hardwood. Cocoa bean hulls decompose nicely and smell really good, but are easily blown around when used as mulch.

Speaking to about 35 people who gathered in the upstairs room at Trattoria Alberto on April 10, Delano urged folks not to be too compulsive about raking all the leaves off their garden. A little benign neglect of the rake can provide a good soil amendment over time, though too many leaves can bury some small plants.

Other pointers offered in Delano's slide-illustrated talk were:

Experiment—have fun with your garden.

Normally the best time to prune is right after a plant blooms.

Many Capitol Hill gardens suffer from plants that have become too large. Prune them back—they may

look ridiculous for a season or two, but most will survive and be better for it. If they die, remember they were too big anyway.

The corollary to this point: select the right plant for each spot and you won't have a plant that needs to be pruned back severely. When buying plants, pay attention to how large they will be when mature.

Water your street tree. Fragers has "tree gators" that release water in a slow stream. Buy one—or punch a few holes in the bottom of an empty 5-gallon plastic bucket (the kind often used for plaster), fill it with water and allow to seep slowly onto the roots. ✧

Dream a Little Dream—Deadline: May 13, 2002

by Gene M. Smith, Chair, Environment Committee

Dipping your toe into the grant application pool can be a chilling experience. You may believe your proposed project is not well-defined, even in your own mind. You may consider it of limited scope or impact, or simply a personal “thing” that doesn’t merit external support. You may presume that there is far greater need on the part of someone else or some other project, or that there is far too much competition for limited funds. You may think your application may be rejected due to an improperly stated goal, poor presentation, or that it doesn’t meet the grant criteria.

Let the panel of judges decide.

The Capitol Hill Restoration Society has made this easy for you: the factors for evaluation of a CHRS grant are clearly set out in the *April News*; they are now posted on the Society’s website, www.chrs.org.

Of most importance, the proposed project has to benefit *your* neighborhood on Capitol Hill—that alone is worth 40 points out of a total of 100 points. Second, priority is given to

new ideas—that’s worth another 20 points. Finally, you should be clear and explicit in what you are trying to accomplish; it should be feasible; it should be measurable (to show that it was actually done); and preferably it should be dependent on CHRS funding, rather than funded by several sources. Each of the latter factors is worth 10 points.

The application process is available to any and all who choose to “dream a little dream.” But dream it fast—the deadline falls immediately following the CHRS 45th Annual House & Garden Tours, to be held Mother’s Day weekend. The good news about the nearness of the deadline is that the agony of worrying over the grant particulars will be shortened out of sheer necessity.

The grant applicant may be a school class, guided by their teacher, that wants to make a difference in the world starting with the immediate neighborhood. It may be someone who sees a local eyesore to clean (e.g., graffiti or rubbish removal that requires funds for materials) or who wants to beautify a small corner with plants or other design features. Those

types of projects appeal to me because I believe in improving the outdoor environment. Another type of grant application might request funds for a computer or software or other materials that help support local interests. The opportunities are limited only by your imagination.

Last year, grants totaling \$7500 were made to the Peabody School, the Friends of the Northeast Library, the Capitol Hill Group Ministry and Trees for Capitol Hill. This year, you, your immediate neighborhood, and your organization might be the fortunate beneficiary, but you’ll never know unless you apply.

Helen Keller is credited with saying: “I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks as if they were great and noble.” In other words, that small project you are contemplating may be the one that matters.

The deadline is immediate and firm: to be considered, an original application and six copies *must* be in the Society’s office at 420 10th Street SE Monday, May 13, by 5:00 pm. Grant applications can be obtained from the office. Go for it. ✧

Natatorium Renovation Plan: \$1.6 Million Project Lacks Community Consultation, Vision

by Brian Furness, Chair, Community Development

At an April 17 meeting, the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) announced a \$1.6-million plan to renovate the Capitol East Natatorium. The project will overhaul the bath and locker rooms and replace gutters and pool-operating machinery. Only minor architectural changes are planned for the building at North Carolina and 7th Streets SE. Jair Lynch Consulting/Alpha Corp is managing the renovation.

The pool is to be closed in late May, and work begins in June. User fees are being initiated when the pool

reopens in November, though discounts will be available for those in need.

Community participants questioned the lack of prior consultation, especially with respect to the new fee system. CHRS was notified of the meeting only the day before, after Councilmember Ambrose’s office intervened.

On behalf of the CHRS Board, I criticized the lack of community involvement, along with the absence of a vision and a comprehensive plan that would improve the Natatorium’s appearance, access, and accommodation. The Board would like the build-

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Capitol East Pool with the Eastern Market in the background.

CHRS Presses DC Council to Implement Comprehensive Plan

The DC Government Office of Planning (OP) has proposed, in its budgetary request for 2002/2003, to further delay implementation of the Comprehensive Plan while it revamps the Plan process, format, and content. The proposal, embodied in resolution PR 14-604 and Bill 14-602, would extend the time for submission of new amendments to the Comprehensive Plan from 2002 to 2005, with required progress reports delayed until 2003. It would further authorize the establishment of a large task force, on an open-ended basis, to suggest changes in every aspect of planning. The Comprehensive Plan, first passed in 1984 and mandated by the Home Rule Act of 1974, controls all planning in the District of Columbia.

CHRS supports revamping the Plan's processes, which are cumbersome, but believes that the existing Plan should first be implemented, through zoning and other agency actions. The Society believes that many of the most difficult neighborhood issues of the past ten years, including the Boys Town and Station Place controversies, could have been avoided had zoning regulations as an implementation of the Comprehensive Plan (Ward 6 Plan) been in effect. To that end, Dick Wolf, CHRS City Planning Committee Chair,

provided testimony at an April 11 hearing before the DC City Council Committee of the Whole.

In his testimony, Dick urged the Council not to enact the resolution and law in the form proposed, in order to avoid "throw[ing] away a legacy of more than twenty years of plan law." Dick pointed out that nothing in the OP budget indicates any further action to implement the existing Plan until a new Plan is prepared, and declared, "That is unacceptable."

He stated that when OP Director Andrew Altman met with citizens interested in planning, he solicited support for an extension of time to do amendments. The group agreed to the request, but not for the three years now proposed. Problems with the Plan and its processes were also discussed at that meeting, but not with the intention of discarding the Plan. Mr. Altman did not respond to requests from those at the meeting who asked for implementation of policy that has been pending for many years.

Dick complimented Mr. Altman and his office for some recent large-scale area plans, including the South East Water Front Study and the Reservation 13 Plan, which he deemed "excellent." But he pointed out that such plans "are only wishful

thinking until there is zoning, because the Zoning Commission does not believe that anything in Planning controls their deliberations, despite contrary language in the Comprehensive Plan law and the Home Rule Act." He lamented the failure of OP to perform its obligation to implement the Plan through zoning — a situation that will not be helped by the current proposal.

On behalf of CHRS, Dick also offered several suggestions, including that the OP budget require a line item for an Office of Plan Implementation. He suggested that the Council drop the proposed task force idea — at least until such time that a task force is deemed necessary to investigate fundamental changes in the Home Rule Act. Then, a blue ribbon commission should be appointed for that purpose. He summarized, "...what needs to be accomplished can be done without the 'task force' [using] advice from interested parties... There are ways to accomplish that without legislation and without a great expenditure of money."

The full text of Dick Wolf's testimony is available on the CHRS website, www.chrs.org. Persons without access to the Internet may request a copy from the CHRS office.

Natatorium Renovation Plan *continued*

ing to be modified to make it more inviting and more respectful of Capitol Hill's historic district. Further, we believe that a working entrance from C Street SE would improve convenience and safety by getting pedestrians out of the alley alongside Eastern Market.

The impact of construction on Eastern Market and the Natatorium's other neighbors also needs to be explored. The Eastern Market Community Advisory Committee (EMCAC) and the new Market Manager will meet with the project

manager to ensure that traffic, noise, and machinery do not disrupt Market operations.

At the April meeting, community participants highlighted managerial and operational problems, including deficient and deferred maintenance, poor sanitation and water quality, lack of heat for the water, inadequate supervision to control user-caused damage in the locker and bath rooms, and a cumbersome procedure for use of the community room.

DPR's presentation did not inspire confidence that an adequate

routine maintenance plan would be put in place after the renovations.

In a follow-up letter to DPR Director Albert, CHRS called for the creation of an advisory committee with community participants, and for the preparation of a master plan that will make the renovated Natatorium more community accessible and friendly.

A public meeting on the project is scheduled for May 15 at the Natatorium at 5:30 pm. *

House History Workshop Sponsored by Overbeck Project

The Ruth Ann Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project is adding another approach in its search for longtime area residents who might be candidates for the project's oral interviews. The whole community will benefit from the project-sponsored House History Workshop, open to the public, at the Naval Lodge Hall, 330 Pennsylvania Ave. SE on Tuesday, May 14, at 7:00 pm. Professional house historian Paul K. Williams and oral historian Nancy Metzger will offer attendees advice on how to identify their homes' previous owners, and how to track down those previous owners or their children. Guidance on finding original building permits and even building plans will also be provided.

The Overbeck project hopes to encourage Capitol Hill neighbors in this venture so that project volunteers can conduct tape-recorded interviews with former residents. The project welcomes homeowners as volunteer interviewers: training is provided and recorders are loaned.

The workshop is free but seating is limited and must be reserved. Email info@CapitolHillHistory.org, or call 544-1845 and leave your name, phone number and email address.

The all-volunteer Ruth Ann Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project collects oral histories from longtime neighborhood residents and former residents, building "a permanent, accessible, ongoing record of the people and events that have shaped our community." Find out more at www.CapitolHillHistory.org. ✱

May Preservation Café: Underground on the Hill

by Katie Miller

One of the most popular of the 2001 Preservation Cafés will be re-visited with a new twist in May. Bob Sonderman, senior staff archaeologist with the National Park Service's National Capital Region, continues his description of archaeology in the District of Columbia with an emphasis on Capitol Hill, adding a special look at what's been going on behind the Navy Yard gate.

The final event in the series this spring will be held at Trattoria Alberto, 502 8th St. SE (top floor), at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 8.

Those attending this Café are encouraged to bring any archaeological discoveries they may have made in their yards and neighborhood for on-the-spot speculation and discussion.

Sonderman currently directs archeological investigations and evaluates archaeological sites in the Washington area. He is a consulting archaeologist and member of the DC Historic Preservation Review Board. He also chairs the Curatorial Committee of the Council for Maryland Archeology and the Curation Standards Committee of the Society for Historical Archeology. ✱

Congressional Cemetery Puts Its Best Foot Forward

by Rob Nevitt

Congressional Cemetery's Spring Festival turned out to be a delightful Capitol Hill experience that provided something for everyone. The imagination and work that went into the planning paid off handsomely, and the weather on April 20 cooperated just enough to add to the enjoyment of visitors.

The Restoration Society is proud to have been a supporter of this event, which brought into high relief the potential of Congressional Cemetery as a tourist destination.

The Festival included a wonderful demonstration of gravestone restoration, band music, and speeches, as well as an information station for genealogists that highlighted the education programs connected to the horizontal residents of the cemetery. At another information station, people from Virginia Tech's Landscape Design Department described their project of planning the renovation of the cemetery. A full day's interest in and of itself... but there was more.

A Revolutionary War tour and an iconography tour both proved fascinating. What language is spoken by the figures and carvings on old gravestones? How is the story of the revolution brought alive by the gravesites here?

"Alive" may seem an odd choice of words for a cemetery festival. But the "live" impersonations of some of the more famous residents were exceptional. Elbridge Gerry, for crying out loud... He was really an interesting guy, even though he was a Vice President. If you looked in the eyes of journalist Ann Royall, you would have empathized with the feelings of the city Fathers when they charged her in court with being a scold. A woman ahead of her time. Mary Hall conveyed just the right combination of discretion and mischievousness that made her such a successful "entrepreneur". The ambivalence toward her was summed up in her comment: her mother was happy to live in her house but didn't want Mary to come to her church. Other portrayals were equally as much fun and as edifying.

The Festival could have handled many more patrons. The hope is that next year more publicity and memories of this year's successes will attract a much larger crowd. ✱

CHRS Testifies on Future of Old Naval Hospital

CHRS Board members Dick Wolf and Barbara Eck recently testified before an Urban Land Institute (ULI) Panel convened to explore future uses of the historic building at 921 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, in the center of our community. Panel members heard from City and ANC officials, organizations interested in securing the building for development, community activists, and neighborhood groups. The Panel was convened under contract to the Friends of the Old Naval Hospital, in a process described in the February 2002 issue of the *News*.

Drawing on the Society's many years of involvement in planning, zoning, housing, and economic development, particularly as it relates to the Hill, the CHRS representatives made the following points:

- CHRS believes that the Old Naval Hospital should be restored and renovated as a public building for public use.
- The imminent zoning change that will alter constraints on the commercial uses of upper floors in the Hill's main commercial district will add thousands of square feet of new office space in the neighborhood. This should eliminate the need to add the Naval Hospital site to that mix.
- The City has neglected Capitol Hill when it comes to capital improvements; few such expenditures have been made on "community-serving" activities since home rule. The Natatorium is 35 years old, our schools are all over 40 years old, and our libraries are crowded and deteriorating. In contrast, other parts of the city enjoy community centers such as Guy Mason, Rose Dale, Chevy Chase, and the Southeast Community Tennis Center. In addition, hundreds of millions of

dollars have been spent on various Community Development Corporations (CDCs) over the years.

- Capitol Hill residents and merchants pay substantial taxes, and have enormous private investments in homes and businesses. To serve our needs, we deserve a share of the District's largesse.

Preliminary Panel Conclusions

The report of the ULI Panel is not yet published, but the following summary conclusions were provided to the chair of CHRS's Old Naval Hospital Committee:

- The building and the site are a great public asset in a good location.
- There is a strong community interest in seeing it restored and developed for community uses.
- The estimated cost of restoration, development, support and maintenance (\$9–10 million, excluding asbestos and paint removal) indicates that commercial use such as an office building, apartments or condominiums is not economically feasible.
- The Federal Government owns the building and provided it for city use prior to home rule, when the City was treated as just another federal agency.
- Issues involving approved uses, historic preservation, and asbestos and lead paint removal need to be resolved by the City Government in conjunction with the Federal Government.
- A "signature tenant", i.e., one who would restore and develop the building, would occupy most of it, and would manage its use by other groups, would have to be an entity with the ability to mount a substantial capital campaign.

These problems, constraints, and considerations further enhance CHRS's position that the Old Naval Hospital is a public building which should be put to public use, and the sooner the City Government recognizes its responsibility, the sooner this historic asset will be restored and contribute to the community. ✧

WELCOME CHRS SUPPORTERS

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Acronyms Used in this Issue

ANC	Advisory Neighborhood Commission
CDC	Community Development Corporation
DPR	Department of Parks and Recreation
EMCAC	Eastern Market Community Advisory Committee
FAR	Floor Area Ratio
OP	DC Government Office of Planning
ULI	Urban Land Institute

Mark your Calendar!

MAY

7 Tuesday, time not set

Board of Zoning Adjustment meeting on Boys Town permits.

8 Wednesday, 6:30 pm

Preservation Café, Robert Sonderman, archaeologist with the National Park Service talks about archaeology on the Hill, with a special look at what's been going on behind the Navy Yard gate, Trattoria Alberto, 502 8th St. SE (top floor)

11–12 Saturday–Sunday

45th Capitol Hill House and Garden Tour; Saturday Reception at Old Naval Hospital, Sunday tea at Results the Gym, 315 G Street SE

13 Monday, 5:00 pm

Deadline for submission of proposals for CHRS grants. See page 6.

14 Tuesday, 7:00 pm

Workshop on House History, sponsored by the Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project, Naval Lodge Hall, 330 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, 4th floor. Reservations required; see article on page 8.

15 Wednesday, 5:30 pm

Public meeting on the renovation of the Capitol Hill East Natatorium, North Carolina and 7th SE. See pages 6–7.

21 Tuesday, 6:00 pm

Library Workshop: Researching Neighborhood History. Research strategies and techniques for exploring the history of your neighborhood. Historical Society of Washington, DC. Reservations and advance payment required. Call 202-785-2068.

Short Takes: Development Notes

Kentucky Courts

The 38-unit project can now proceed. On April 23, the Board of Zoning Adjustment approved the zoning variances requested. A demolition permit for the existing buildings at Kentucky and C Streets should be granted before the first of May—it's only a formality. The Society supported the variances, and has long worked actively to bring about the development proposed. Reportedly, most of the units have already been sold.

Bryan School

Developer Eakin/Youngentob will begin work in earnest in May or June. Asbestos and hazardous materials have been remediated, and some initial site work has been done. The next step will be tearing down the 1950s "new" school wing. The Society worked with the Bryan School Neighborhood Association to ensure a neighborhood-friendly use for this site. ✧

Looking Back on Capitol Hill

Tony Cuzo, who grew up above his parent's grocery store at the corner of 9th Street and South Carolina Avenue SE, remembers a time before credit cards.

"Yes, we all helped in the store—serving people, figuring their bills. We had an old adding machine—punch the figures in and pull the handle and you got the total. We had charge customers that we had little passbooks for. Every time they came in and got something, we'd just write the amount down. At the end of the week they'd come in to settle up. We'd add it up; they'd pay; we'd mark the page paid, and go on to the next one. We had quite a few of those. We had one customer who had a flock of kids. She ran into hard times and couldn't pay so Dad says, 'I'll tell you what you do. Deal for cash and every week give me 50 cents or a dollar on the bill until it's paid.' She did it. We had another customer that ran up a bill and couldn't pay. They both died and the children knew that Dad was owed that bill. They said, 'We're going to pay you.' Each week they came over and paid Dad something on it until it was paid off. We had some good times there and we had some rough times."

If you know someone who grew up on Capitol Hill long ago and you'd like to suggest him or her as a candidate for an oral history interview, please contact the Ruth Ann Overbeck Oral History Project (info@CapitolHillHistory.org or 543-4544) ✧

Capitol Hill Restoration Society

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