



# NEWS

www.chrs.org

August 2002

## From 1955 to 2005: The Society Approaches its 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday

*"Our purpose is to accelerate the private restoration work that has begun in this locality, to offset the flight to the suburbs with encouragement to remodeling, and to foster a civic and national pride in a distinguished and charming section of our city."*

*Press release, Capitol Hill Restoration Society, March 2, 1955.*

*by Gary Peterson, At Large Board Member*

On the evening of January 28, 1955, a small group of Capitol Hill residents met at 11 Third Street NE, the home of Lt. Col. and Mrs. Paul L. McPherran. The purpose of the meeting was to form a group that would increase interest in the restoration of homes on Capitol Hill. Those in attendance were: Mr. David A Hassel, 220 Second Street NE; Mr. and Mrs. John Poindexter, 116 Fourth Street NE; Mrs. B.B. Railey, 308 A Street NE; and Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Greathouse, 21 Third Street NE. Col. McPherran was selected Chairman, and John Poindexter agreed to draft by-laws.

A second meeting was held at the same location two weeks later, when the name "Capitol Hill Restoration Society" was chosen. The next meeting on March 2 and subsequent meetings were held at the Alva Belmont House, Headquarters of the National Women's Party, at 144 Constitution Avenue NE. At the May 4 meeting, the by-laws were adopted and Richard H. Stringfellow became the Society's first elected president.

On February 1, 1995, the CHRS held its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary meeting in the Fellowship Hall of the Capitol Hill United Methodist Church. Past presidents recalled important events; birthday cake and refreshments were served. The highlight of the evening was a presentation by Ruth Ann Overbeck and Hazel Kreinheder on the creation of the Historic District.

On January 28, 2005, CHRS will be 50. It will be time for a big celebration. As Past President and newly elected Director at Large, I am chairing a committee of past presidents to plan the celebration. The plan is that it will give Capitol Hill a permanent memorial to CHRS's 50 years. I would like to hear your proposals: please contact me at pgarylaw@aol.com. You'll hear more about the plans for the party and the memorial as the time for the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party draws near. ✧

### CHRS Slate Elected

In the recent mail ballot for election of CHRS Officers and Board members, 126 ballots were returned. Of these, 116 voted for for the entire slate of candidates as printed in the ballot, a slate recommended by the Election Committee. The other ten ballots contained votes for some, but not all, of the candidates. There were no write-in votes. The duly elected Officers and Board members are:

President	Robert Nevitt
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President	Barbara Eck
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President	Charles McMillion
Treasurer	Lyle Schauer
Secretary	Tom Grahame
At Large	Mike Canning
At Large	Gary Peterson
At Large	Shelly Rydell
At Large	Diane P. Scott

Biographies of those new to the board members appear on page 4. ✧

## President's Column

by Robert Nevitt

It is the political season in Washington, as well as the summer doldrums. Our own election didn't add much to the heat, although I can say with pride that, unlike the petition signature episode in the Mayoral contest, there was no underhanded activity of any kind to report. The Board assembled a slate which the members found acceptable and said so with their ballots. The details of the election can be found on page 1 of the *News*. We welcome all the new Board members and say goodbye to those who are stepping down with thanks for their great service.

Katie Miller has been tireless; always willing to take on another task without being asked. As Secretary and First Vice President, she consistently provided the underpinning and continuity that a volunteer organization needs badly. Mark

Board when he was assigned out of the country. Donna Foster is moving on to other activities, having contributed so much to the success of the Saturday night reception at the Old Naval Hospital for this year's House Tour.

Committee Chairman are selected by me, although they vote as Board members. You should know who they are. T. C. Benson is leaving her at-large seat to head the Membership Committee. This is going to be a major initiative to actively recruit members and keep membership information in a more sophisticated database. We are upgrading our computer hardware to facilitate TC's reforms.

Mike Canning has agreed to chair the Budget Committee, and John Shages will head up the Election Committee. Dick Wolf, Brian Furness, Linda Killian, Nancy Metzger, Lyle Schauer and Gene Smith will continue as Chairs of City



both could use a backup—please see the article on page 7 if you have some computer skills and interest in this kind of work.

We currently have no chair of the Public Safety Committee and I have no ready candidate. If you're concerned about effective policing, community policing, traffic, or parking, you might like to consider becoming the Chair of this Committee, since it provides a podium for raising questions to the Council and the Administration.

One of the problems with our current membership database is that it is difficult to sort people by the interests they expressed when they joined. We hope to develop systems that will let us do this, and to poll members for interests and willingness to take on chores that fit them. As it is, I am left sending out a general plea for an expression of interest in the work of the committees we have.

Please, let me know if you care about this or any of the other activities. Time requirements aren't onerous, you'll enjoy the company of like-minded people, and you'll have the satisfaction of advancing progress on things that matter to all of us.

I hope many of you will tuck the *News* into your summer reading, and you'll step up and join in! \*

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*I am left sending out a general plea for an expression of interest in the work of the committees we have.*

Anderson has served the Society and the Board in many ways—most recently trying to discover how and if new legislation on nuisance properties is working. (I'm only sorry that his last task was such a frustrating one.) Katie is moving to Hilton Head; Mark and his wife Sandy to Williamsburg. Our gratitude certainly extends to Sandy, who supported the Society and ran the House Tour three years ago.

Mark Flemming was lost to the

Planning, Community Development, Community Relations, Historic District, Zoning and Environment, respectively.

Bernadette McMahon continues as Chair of the Communications Committee, but is retiring as co-editor of the *News*. (Editor Hilary Russell will work with new recruit Mary Ronan.) Graphic designer Roxanne Walker does the layout of the *News* and Scott Morton continues as webmaster for [www.chrs.org](http://www.chrs.org), but

## Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President ..... Robert Nevitt  
 First Vice  
 President ..... Barbara Eck  
 Second Vice  
 President ..... Charles McMillion  
 Treasurer ..... Lyle Schauer  
 Secretary ..... Tom Grahame  
 At Large ..... Mike Canning  
 At Large ..... Gary Peterson  
 At Large ..... Shelly Rydell  
 At Large ..... Diane P. Scott  
 Immediate Past  
 President ..... Brian R. Furness

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

Mike Canning, *Budget*  
 John Shages, *Elections*  
 Dick Wolf, *City Planning*  
 Brian R. Furness, *Community Development*  
 Linda Killian, *Community Relations*  
 Nancy Metzger, *Historic District*  
 T.C. Benson, *Membership*  
 Vacant, *Endowment*  
 Vacant, *Public Safety*  
 Lyle Schauer, *Zoning*  
 Larry Pearl, *Beall Bequest Committee*  
 Bernadette McMahon, *Communications*  
 Vacant, *House Tour*  
 Gene Smith, *Environment*

### NEWSLETTER:

Hilary Russell & Mary Ronan, *Editors*  
 Roxanne Walker, *Design & Layout*

### WEBSITE:

Scott Morton, *Webmaster*

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.

## Boys Town Elects to Appeal to the Courts



by Brian Furness, Chair,  
 Community Development Committee

Girls and Boys Town has elected to go to the DC Court of Appeals to challenge the Board of Zoning Adjustment's (BZA) ruling effectively denying the Omaha-based non-profit the ability to use buildings under construction on its site at Potomac Avenue and 14th Street SE. Boys Town could also have sought a Special Exception to operate the group homes—in effect accepting the BZA decision—but this approach would have required a public hearing; something that Boys Town has consistently sought to avoid.

Boys Town's filing before the Court of Appeals alleges errors were committed by the BZA in reaching the decision that the Zoning Administrator mistakenly granted the original permit. The BZA will be defended by the Corporation Counsel. Southeast Citizens for Smart Development (SCSD) and ANC 6B, which brought the challenge before the BZA, will intervene in support of the BZA's decision. The stakes are important to Capitol Hill and communities all over the city, since the BZA's decision makes it harder for group home and other community-based treatment facility

operators to skirt laws that discourage concentration of facilities.

After the BZA decision, Boys Town submitted a revised application for building permits as single-family dwellings and is moving to finish construction. The DC Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs granted the permits—but perhaps in error, as the BZA decision documents that the buildings do not qualify as single-family houses. Whatever the outcome on the single-family dwelling issue, Boys Town can not use buildings as a group home facility for 24 children, as it had set out to do prior to the BZA decision.

Boys Town has also requested building permits to begin construction on the second phase of its project—an administrative building and a short-term residential facility. The latter would need a special exception to begin operations.

**Late breaking news:** as of August 1, U.S. District Court Judge Robertson dismissed Boys Town's suit against SCSD and community activists Will Hill and Ellen Oppenweiner entirely, and dismissed its suit against the city partially. The BZA decision significantly undercut Boys Town's allegations that community opposition to its project was legally frivolous. \*

## Meet the Newest Members of the CHRS Board

The June issue of the *News* provided only the briefest of information about the new candidates on the election slate. To make up for that, we're taking this opportunity to introduce the newest elected members of the CHRS Board.

### Charles McMillion, Second Vice President



Charles McMillion and his wife, Marilyn, have lived on Capitol Hill for 20 years. Charles is president of his own consulting firm, MBG Information Services, dealing with international trade, finance and business development. He serves on the Business Advisory Panel to the District's Chief Financial Officer. Charles is a former professor at Johns

Hopkins University, where he was associate director of their public policy institute and a former contributing editor of the *Harvard Business Review*. He's occupied senior staff positions in the House and Senate, and is a founder of the Congressional Economic Leadership Institute. He has been associated with CHRS for 14 years and now serves on Lyle Schauer's Zoning Committee and Don Price's Endowment Committee. He chaired the Society's recent initiatives regarding the planned new headquarters for the Securities and Exchange Commission at Station Place (alongside Union Station). Charles claims to be an enthusiastic, if unexceptional, gardener.

### Gary Peterson, At Large



Long-time members will immediately recognize Gary Peterson's name. He served CHRS as Vice President in 1987-88, Secretary in 1988-90, and President from 1992-95. He was also Chair of the Zoning Committee from 1989-95. He lived in Europe from late 1995 until early this year. While living in Budapest, he was a

member of the PR/Fund Raising Committee of the Friends of the Franz Liszt Music Academy. Gary came to live on the Hill in July of 1969. He and his wife Trudy moved into their current house in February 1975.

### Diane P. Scott, At Large



Diane P. Scott has called Capitol Hill home for the last four years. In 2000, Diane realized her dream and purchased a 111-year old Victorian row house just nine blocks from the U.S. Capitol. A member of CHRS for the past two years, Diane is an active participant in the Preservation Cafés and in the annual

House Tour. When she isn't working as a Project Manager in IBM's Federal Government Group, Diane continues to renovate her home in her quest to bring it back to its original glory. She says she is looking forward to working with the CHRS Board in the coming year.

### Mike Canning, At Large

Mike Canning's professional life included 28 years as a Foreign Service Officer with the U.S. Information Agency (USIA). He served in eight countries and on four continents before his retirement in 1993. Since that time, he has been a regular movie reviewer for the *Hill Rag* and a freelance writer on film and politics. He has been involved with sundry volunteer activities on the Hill, particularly with the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop, where he is active with their "Films on the Hill" program. Mike has lived on Capitol Hill on-and-off for over 35 years with his wife, Judith Jones Canning, and they raised two daughters here.

### Shelly Rydell, At Large



Architect Shelly Rydell is a new member of the Society and the Board. She was introduced to CHRS through this year's House and Garden Tour where she served as a house captain. She studied architecture at North Carolina State University, and has worked in the design field for 10 years. Her professional

focus is retail design and architectural signage; in her free time she has a passion for renovating houses. Shelly and her husband Shannon (also an architect) are embarking on their newest project in a little house on the east end of Capitol Hill. The Rydells have lived on the Hill for three years, and introduced the neighborhood to many people who are now their neighbors.

## Looking Back on Capitol Hill: Far Away in the Grotto

by Nancy Metzger, Chair, Historic District Committee

Until very recently, the Capitol and its grounds have been a favorite destination for neighborhood children. Playing on the grounds, reading comics in the Library of Congress, sledding down the Hill have all figured in oral histories of neighborhood residents. The late J. George Butler's memoir (*Simpler Times*) about growing up on Capitol Hill in the early 1900s recalled good times in the grotto on the Capitol grounds:

*The Capitol grounds... were the original grounds as laid out by Frederick Law Olmstead, the noted architect of Central Park in New York City. One of the features of Olmstead's original plan was the "Grotto," described by him as a "...cool retreat during the hot summer." It was halfway down the hill from the Capitol on the west [Senate] side. It consisted of a hexagonal, arched red brick summer building covered with ivy and wisteria vines and shaded by nearby trees... The floor was sunk a few steps below ground, further adding to the cooling effect of the beautiful fountain bubbling in the center. . . Here was plenty of ammunition for our water pistols, cooling water to drink, and shade to rest in. We could play and drench each other to our heart's content. Further, the "Grotto" was far enough away from the Capitol itself so as not to be of much interest to the Capitol police."*

If you know someone who should be included in the Capitol Hill oral history project, please contact Bernadette and Jim McMahon at 543-4544 or McMahon@his.com.



## Historic Preservation Staff Officer Announced for Capitol Hill

by Nancy Metzger, Chair, Historic District Committee

Emily Paulus, architectural historian with the DC Historic Preservation Office, has been assigned as the staff officer for Capitol Hill. Paulus will be working with residents who are proposing modifications to the exteriors of their buildings within the Capitol Hill Historic District. Window replacement, door replacement, siding replacement, brick repointing, fences, additions, and roof replacements are among the changes that require permits. Part of the permit process is approval from the Historic Preservation Review Board.

Paulus comes to the DC Historic Preservation Office with experience in Providence, Rhode Island, where she wrote National Register nominations, developed com-

munity-wide architectural surveys, and documented historic buildings and sites throughout New England. She was also employed as a planner with the Baltimore County Office of Planning and received a Master in Historic Preservation from the University of Delaware.

Paulus can be reached at the DC Historic Preservation Office (801 North Capitol Street, NE) at 202-442-8845 or by e-mail at emily.paulus@dc.gov.

Ginger Carter (442-8827; ginger.carter@dc.gov) is still the "front line" of the historic preservation permit process, and can also answer residents' queries about the process or offer guidance concerning specific situations.

To report work being done without a permit, contact historic preservation inspector Toni Cherry at 442-8844 or HP\_inspector@hotmail.com. ✧

## Urban Land Institute Panel Findings on Old Naval Hospital Released

by Barbara Eck, Chair, Old Naval Hospital Committee

The Friends of the Old Naval Hospital have released the full report on the Old Naval Hospital by the National Panel of the Urban Land Institute (ULI). This Panel is made up of specialists in urban planning, finance, historic preservation, architecture, and development, and its report, *A Strategy for Reuse*, is the product of an intensive study and meetings conducted last April.

CHRS contributed to the underwriting of the study, and was represented at the ULI meetings by Dick Wolf (chair of the City Planning Committee) and by me. The Panel heard testimony from community groups, government officials, and entities interested in developing or occupying the site. Its goal was to look at two main issues: the market for reuse of the building and the process necessary for redeveloping the property.

Contrary to the Panel's initial expectation, findings indicate that the property is probably not suitable for a purely commercial enterprise. Although the structure of the building is in good shape, the City has neglected maintenance, failed to oversee alterations, and allowed sloppy and often detrimental patchwork repairs.

To make use of this historic building will require about \$6 million for restoration, and an endowment of

about \$4 million to generate the operating revenue needed each year.

The Panel lists several criteria for reuse of the building.

- A tenant must have the ability to raise and maintain the capital needed to occupy the building and preserve it as a historic structure.
- The future use of the building should be as "unique as the original use of the building itself" and should highlight the building's status as a "hero building."
- Community access should be accommodated in any reuse.
- The use should not be parking intensive because of the limited parking in the area.
- Space in the building should be set aside to incorporate the history of the building and its significance to the city and to the country.

The report also details a process the Panel would like to see put in place to provide clear movement and direction for the restoration and reuse of the building. While proposing an accelerated process, the panel strongly emphasizes the need for carefully drafting the base documents to assure a correct restoration of the building as well as a carefully managed process to select and monitor the work and actions of the lessee.

The panel concluded that the Old Naval Hospital is a "hidden gem" on Capitol Hill that can become an asset for the community and the nation. With its unique history and location, it "deserves the proper redevelopment process" to ensure that it is a resource for the whole city and its visitors. The full report is available at the Southeast Library. ✧

The Office of Property Management, as owner of the building, has scheduled meetings to obtain public comment on the reuse of the Old Naval Hospital. These will take place on August 1 and August 14 at 7:00 pm at the Old Naval Hospital.

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## "Capitol Hill During the Civil War" Inaugurates 2002-03 Overbeck Lectures

by Bernadette McMahon, Chair,  
Communications Committee

The Ruth Ann Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project announces the second in their series of lectures—the first of the 2002-2003 season. On September 10, American University Professor Edward C. Smith will describe the many ways in which everyday life on Capitol Hill was profoundly altered during the early 1860s by local Civil War activities. Among other things, he'll be talking about the hundreds of new workers who serviced ships and churned out munitions at the Navy Yard, the neighbor-

hood church that became a recruiting station for U.S. Colored Troop #1, and the hospital to treat wounded soldiers that sprang up on the site of present-day Lincoln Park.

The lecture, in the fourth floor Naval Lodge Hall, 330 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, will be presented at 8 pm on September 10. Admission is free, but seating is limited and reservations are required. If possible, reserve by email ([info@CapitolHillHistory.org](mailto:info@CapitolHillHistory.org)); voice messages requesting reservations may be left at 202-544-1845. Please provide name, phone number and email address, and number of seats requested. ✧

## Eastern Market: EMCAC Postpones Decision Expanding Services, Recommends City Move Forward on Farmers Shed

by Brian Furness, Chair,  
Community Development Committee

The Eastern Market Community Advisory Committee (EMCAC), the community panel created by law to advise the market manager and the City on Eastern Market issues, declined to endorse—or even consider seriously—the manager’s proposals to extend the operating hours to 7 p.m. and to launch a Thursday afternoon farmer’s market. The Thursday market, proposed on an experimental basis by Capitol Hill’s Bernadine Prince (who organized the very successful Dupont Circle Farmers Market), would have been limited to producers. Hearing that the existing merchants and farmers were largely opposed to extending the

hours and to a Thursday farmers’ market, the EMCAC deferred action, effectively killing the proposal.

As CHRS representative, I had supported the manager’s proposal, pointing to the Board’s informal endorsement of new and expanded market services to the Capitol Hill community.

Some EMCAC members felt action was premature, since a business plan for the market is still in negotiation. The plan forms a part of the City’s consideration of whether to give a long-term management contract to Eastern Market Venture, the manager-candidate whose bid was accepted last year. EMCAC is considering holding a meeting to obtain public comment on the business plan in September.

On the farmers’ shed issue, the EMCAC recommended that the City hire Heery International to prepare working drawings of the structure to replace the existing 1930s farmers’ line shed. This firm had developed the concept after much public comment and community input. The plans will be faithful to the community vision. It provides a break for the main entrance at the South Hall, running water, electrical outlets, up-lighting to illuminate the shed at night, and down-lighting (or task lighting) for use of the vendors. The working drawings will be the subject of further public scrutiny, comment, and modification. Hopefully, the project can get underway during the winter, when outside activity is lowest. ✧

## ISO: Software Skills

by Bernadette McMahon, Chair,  
Communications Committee

The CHRS Communications Committee is seeking members with specific computer skills who would be willing to provide backup and assistance to two terrific volunteers: Roxanne Walker, who lays out the *News* and takes or finds photos, and Scott Morton, the webmaster of [www.chrs.org](http://www.chrs.org). Both are committed to continuing their volunteer service to the Society, but even the most dedicated volunteers need a break—for business or vacation travel, or just to take to bed with a bad cold!

Roxanne designed the *News* with PageMaker. If you’re familiar with PageMaker and would be willing to layout the *News* occasionally, please let us know. Usually, the layout is done over a weekend. You don’t have to own the software: the CHRS Board has agreed to purchase a copy.

Scott designed and created the website for CHRS last Fall, and he’s been its sole maintainer ever since. Scott uses Front Page software to make changes. As above, the Society is willing to purchase a copy for a volunteer to use. Maintenance of the site is sporadic and doesn’t involve a lot of time. New material is added to the site at the request of Board members. The calendar is updated as requests are received by email. A backup for Scott is critical when he is out of town and changes need to be made quickly. An importance example is the posting of the monthly agenda for the City’s Historic Preservation Review Board: many people check the CHRS site prior to these meetings to see which projects will be discussed.

To help us with these tasks, or to contribute in other ways to improving Society communications, contact me at [bcmahon@his.com](mailto:bcmahon@his.com), or 543-4544.

## Demolition at Bryan School Completed

by Brian Furness

The 1958 wing of the old Bryan School, in the 1300 block of Independence Avenue SE, is now history; Eakin-Youngentob completed demolition during the last week of July. The site is now clear for the construction of 36 townhouses and conversion of the old Bryan building into condominiums.

Demolition of the Kentucky Courts “family” buildings is scheduled to start in early August. The 1950s-era garden apartment-style buildings will be replaced by a mixed-income townhouse development that will take its architectural cues from the surrounding neighborhood. ✧

## Mark Your Calendar!

### AUGUST

#### 14 Wednesday, 7:00 pm

Your chance to comment about the reuse of the Old Naval Hospital. 901 Pennsylvania Ave., SE. See page 6.

#### 15 Thursday, 6:30 pm

Casey Trees Inventory Finale. Sheila Hogan will discuss the importance of restoring and enhancing the District's tree canopy. National Building Museum, Register at 272-2448 or [www.nbm.org](http://www.nbm.org).

#### 20 Tuesday, 6:30 pm

The Global Dimensions of Sprawl. Molly O'Meara Sheehan, World-Watch Institute will discuss efforts to rebuild cities to combat the automobiles negative impact. National Building Museum, 272-2448 or [www.nbm.org](http://www.nbm.org).

#### 21 Wednesday, 6:30 pm

Baseball in Washington: D.C. Steps up to the Plate. RFK Stadium could be used for games as early as next season if efforts to bring a team to the District succeed. Panel discussion, National Building Museum, 272-2448 or [www.nbm.org](http://www.nbm.org).

### SEPTEMBER

#### 10 Tuesday, 8:00 pm

Overbeck Lecture: Capitol Hill During the Civil War. American University Professor Edward C. Smith will describe the many ways in which everyday life on Capitol Hill was profoundly altered during the early 1860s by local Civil War activities. Reserve by email to [info@CapitolHillHistory.org](mailto:info@CapitolHillHistory.org) or call 202-544-1845. See article on page 6.

#### 18 Wednesday, 6:30 pm

First Fall 2002 Preservation Cafe. Check [www.chrs.org](http://www.chrs.org) for speaker, location and other details.

## Preservation Café Fall Schedule

by Nancy Metzger, Chair, Historic District Committee

Mark your calendars for the Fall Preservation Cafés: September 18, October 16, and November 13. The Historic District Committee is working now to line up speakers and venues. These will be announced on the CHRS website ([www.chrs.org](http://www.chrs.org)) and in Hill publications as soon as plans are firm.

Preservation Cafés are held in a local restaurant, starting at 6:30 p.m., and are limited to 45 minutes so that folks can either continue home or perhaps have dinner in the host restaurant. Cafés present topics of interest to Capitol Hill residents—sometimes information on maintenance and repair issues (roofing, repointing, window replacement), and other times topics of general interest such as preservation easements, researching your house history, or archaeology on the Hill. The cafés have an informal format so that the audience can share ideas and reactions with the speaker. \*

### Capitol Hill Restoration Society

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