



NEWS

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April 2008

Beyond the Boundaries 51st Annual Capitol Hill House & Garden Tour

(and pub crawl)

Saturday, May 10 &
Sunday, May 11, 2008

by Aileen C. Moffatt

So you think you have seen it all on the house tour before? Been there, done that? Well, think again! This year the annual Mother's Day House and Garden Tour has some incredible surprises in store for you. Yes indeed, we are taking you on an adventure outside the historic district — *beyond the boundaries* — to up-and-coming Capitol Hill neighborhoods with great flair and panache that are placing them among the most sought after areas in the city. So get out ahead of the curve and check out the fantastic homes and businesses participating in this year's tour so you can see for yourself just how truly eclectic Capitol Hill is ... again!

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Top: 110-year-old Pierce School, located at 1375 Maryland Avenue, NE, has recently been converted to loft-style apartments. The yard surrounding the building is decorated with large metal flower sculptures

Right: The 100 block of Tennessee Avenue, NE, just north of Lincoln Park. House number 152, built in 1909, is on the tour and, wow, is it a beauty



President's Column

by Dick Wolf

The CHRS Beyond the Boundaries initiative will be extensively written about in this newsletter because it is both the focus of our annual House and Garden Tour on Mother's Day and also the major exclusive initiative of the Society. The net from this year's tour proceeds will go towards the costly historic surveys we have undertaken in order to document the buildings in, and understand the development history of, greater Capitol Hill. These costs include professional fees for archival research, analysis of survey results, and preparation of a database. Once we have completed the survey work, we will have a valuable database of information for the neighborhood, and will have taken a first step toward historic designation for those neighborhoods interested in pursuing it.

The survey results can be used for any number of local history projects, such as neighborhood

tours and heritage trails. They can also help determine whether a neighborhood developed as part of Capitol Hill or as a distinctly separate neighborhood.

This year, the area around Barney Circle has completed its survey and submitted an application to the DC Historic Preservation Office to become its own historic district. We are now working with the ANCs to survey the Rosedale neighborhood, along with the area just northeast of the Historic District, and all of Hill East. The work is both extensive and detailed, but it is very important that we document all of our potentially significant historic structures now, given the pending enormous development on all sides of Capitol Hill—exemplified by the NoMA plan discussed elsewhere in the newsletter; the development of Reservation 13; and the growth of the Navy Yard area south of the freeway. We will all get a sample of the impact of this development on the Hill with the opening of the

new baseball stadium on South Capitol and M Streets, SE.

With our tasks laid out, CHRS needs every one of its members to participate in some manner in this year's tour. We need house attendants, ticket sellers, ticket buyers, and donors to underwrite the tour. We already have some very generous sponsors. Remember, the area beyond the boundaries of the existing historic district have some of the same wonderful characteristics that brought many of us to the Hill years ago: serpentine alleys, funky buildings (some still in disrepair), and a feeling of being a "fringe" neighborhood with a strong sense of block solidarity. Most important, tour participants will be seeing young families coping with houses needing "everything", and building more of what CHRS supports—a strong urban community. We also have, along H Street, NE, some of the best in new theatres, pubs, and even condos with a historic core.

I look forward to seeing everyone on the tour. ✧

Councilmember Brown Speaks at CHRS Community Forum

by Shauna Holmes

At-Large City Councilmember Kwame Brown was the featured speaker at CHRS's March 13 Community Forum. Mr. Brown, who chairs the City Council's Economic Development Committee, addressed the unprecedented level of development going on now in Washington, a lot of it in Ward 6, and emphasized the importance of ensuring that projects respect the character of the communities in which they take place.

Responding to a question about reconciling new construction with a neighborhood's historic integrity, he pointed to Advisory

Neighborhood Commissions as vehicles for residents' input, along with organizations like CHRS and others. He believes in the importance of community participation in city planning and review processes and seeks to ensure that all have an opportunity to articulate their concerns and hopes. Furthermore, he doesn't mind holding up projects so such participation can take place.

When asked about the large volume of construction taking place without required permits, as well as the lack of responsiveness by the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) when told about such activity, he replied that DCRA badly needs revamp-

ing, that DCRA is so big it is difficult to penetrate, but that it is time for accountability and results. He said that Councilmember Mary Cheh, who chairs the City Council's Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs, is conducting aggressive oversight on DCRA. Mr. Brown and Ward 6 Councilmember Tommy Wells are both on the Committee.

Mr. Brown also spoke about the need for city teens and adults to receive vocational education and the current lack of infrastructure for such training. In particular, he is looking forward to both new architectural and engineering programs and potential opportunities for internships with developers. ✧

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www.chrs.org

Celebrating more than 50 years helping 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. With your participation we will continue to do so for many years to come.

Start or Renew a CHRS Membership

- * On the Web at www.CHRS.org
 - * Call 202-543-0425 and choose option 2
 - * Pick up a form at one of our meetings
- Starting at just \$25 per year for a single membership, it's a great deal.

CHRS Opposes Brown Memorial Expansion Into L'Enfant Park



by Elizabeth Nelson

Brown Memorial AME Church recently revealed plans to construct two large additions to the building at 130 14th Street, NE. These plans include a two-story addition to the North Carolina Avenue side of the church, which was built in 1959 on the site of the congregation's first church. A handicapped-accessible ramp is included on the North Carolina Avenue side, and an elevator is proposed for the former lobby. Also proposed is a two-story addition to the front of the existing structure, which would enclose what is now their front porch and create a new vestibule. The existing porch and steps currently extend almost to the property line. The new porch and steps would be built in front of the new vestibule, beyond their property line into a public park, necessitating an additional walkway through that park's present green space to provide access to the new entrance.

This triangle park (Reservation 236), formed by the intersections of Constitution Avenue and North Carolina Avenue, NE, is one of the many small parks included in L'Enfant's original design for the city. The L'Enfant plan was designated as a landmark on the National Register of Historic Places in 1994,

and this reservation is included in the inventory of contributing features. The park was transferred to DC jurisdiction in 1972.

In 1803, surveyor Nicholas King wrote the following argument against alteration of L'Enfant's plan:

These spacious avenues and streets and open areas or public spaces, at the intersections of streets and avenues (so ornamental and conducive to the purity of the air) which yet remain ought to be forever secured to the city.

Early defenders of these small parks argued that they should not be incorporated into adjacent lots or sold to private developers; they "never should be liable to be appropriated to any private use or changed from their original purpose."

Both ANC 6A and the North Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association wrote letters to the Historic Preservation Review Board opposing the extension of the porch and steps into Reservation 236. The CHRS Board voted at its March 18 meeting to support the integrity of the L'Enfant Plan and to oppose, absent a compelling public need, the use of Reservation 236 for private purposes. CHRS does not oppose the North Carolina Avenue addition. ✧

Second Northeast Capitol Hill Walking Tour

Beyond the Boundaries on Tennessee Avenue, Warren Street, and Constitution Avenue

by Beth Purcell

On March 15, 2008, thirty neighbors joined Elizabeth Nelson, Donna Hanousek, and Beth Purcell for our second historic walking tour of North Lincoln Park.

On the 200 and 300 blocks of Tennessee Avenue and Corbin Place, we saw multiple Flemish bond rowhouses constructed in the 1910s by Harry A. Kite. Excellent examples of “daylighter” rowhouses include Kite’s 1916 porch-front houses at 221-235 Tennessee Avenue, NE. During this time, middle class buyers wanted bungalows. Although land on Capitol Hill was too expensive to build and sell detached houses like bungalows, these buyers



Tour participants listen to Beth Purcell (dark shirt, pointing) explain house features along the 200 block of 14th Street, NE.

could afford rowhouses. Architects successfully incorporated bungalow-style elements (e.g. porches and dormers) into rowhouses. For example, these Tennessee Avenue rowhouses have a front porch over the full width of the house and a mansard

roof with gable dormers (some of the most spectacular dormers on Capitol Hill — three sets of windows, each with nine lights).

The one-story brick rowhouses at 1337-1353 C Street, NE, were designed and built by Charles Gessford in 1886. They are 11 feet wide and 25 feet deep, with a stepped design at the cornice. His other small houses at 257-261 Warren Street, NE, have been demolished. Gessford is one of the best known Capitol Hill architect/builders. Other small, two-story narrow houses are nearby (e.g., 310-334 14th Street, NE (1912); 1348-1360 C Street, NE (1911); 1362-1378 C Street, NE (1912)). Early real property tax records suggest that these small houses were once rental properties.

The rowhouse development at 1400-1434 C Street, 311-319 14th Street, NE, and 310-340 15th Street, NE, was designed by Albert H. Beers in 1910. These rowhouses have Flemish bond brick. The houses also have a two-bay front porch, with a projecting cornice in front of the parapet wall in two alternating designs: an eyebrow raking cornice on center and a stepped pediment with the step in the center. Beers

Thank You, Beyond the Boundaries Volunteers

by Donna Hanousek

CHRS would like to thank the volunteers who have submitted their survey forms and/or photos as part of the effort to survey northeast and southeast of the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Just in case you haven’t heard, CHRS is working with the ANCs 6A and 6B to survey the buildings outside the Capitol Hill Historic District. Architectural historians from the firm Tracerics will undertake the archival survey work (like assembling building permits) and will create an informational database on the buildings. We’ve had volunteers performing the on-site survey work, which provides detailed descriptions of each building, along with a photograph.

Thanks to all of our dedicated survey and photography volunteers—**Larry Janezich, Bryan Cassidy, Jeff Davis, Pat Taylor, Mark Williams, Sam Manivong, Elizabeth Nelson, David Holmes, and Gary Peterson**—who have met the requested March deadline.

We also give special thanks to a trio of talented architectural historians from the Trust for Architectural Easements—**Heather Massler, Cathy Sellers, and Jennifer Brennan**—who provided both volunteer survey and photographic assistance to our effort.

For those of you have not yet turned in your assignments—we hope to be thanking you next month! ✧

is credited with Harry Wardman's breakthrough designs for porch-front rowhouses. This design, for another builder, is an example of early porch-front houses.

The flat-front brick rowhouses at 241-245 Warren Street, NE, were built for Herman R. Howenstein in 1907. This was early in his career, before he had his own construction company. In the 1910s-1920s, he built many daylighter porch-front rowhouses all over Capitol Hill. His rowhouses have a special look: beige brick, with a basketweave design over the windows and a straight mansard slate roof with a single gable dormer.

The final stop was 1345-1363 Constitution Avenue, NE, designed

and built by the famous architect B. Stanley Simmons in 1892. These houses combine design elements from Richardsonian Romanesque (coursed ashlar stone and foliate carving) and Queen Anne (gable roofs, oriel windows, belt coursing). Although these houses are just inside the historic district boundaries, four of them would have been demolished in the 1990s. Vigilant neighbors used the historic district protections to successfully block the planned demolition and saved them for us to enjoy.

More tours are planned – watch the News for a schedule. Please let us know if you and your neighbors would like a walking tour of your Beyond the Boundaries

area. Contact Elizabeth Nelson, Elizabeth_knits@yahoo.com.

See www.chrs.org for more photos from the tour, as well as summaries of historical building permits for eastern Capitol Hill. ✧

Please Note

CHRS has reconsidered its acceptance of financial assistance for our Beyond the Boundaries survey effort from the Trust for Architectural Easements. We will instead fund the work through our usual fundraising efforts, so as not to give the appearance of endorsing either the preservation easement program or any specific easement-granting organization.

ARCHITECTS AND BUILDERS

Albert H. Beers, architect (1859-1911). Beers worked extensively with Harry Wardman, and two of their projects appear on the National Register of Historic Places. Beers designed many rowhouses for Wardman and is credited with Wardman's breakthrough designs for daylighter rowhouses. He also worked with other builders, including Harry A. Kite, Chris Cox Dawson, George Barkman, and T. J. McCubbin.

Charles Gessford, architect/builder (1831-1894). Gessford (who lived at 661 South Carolina Avenue, SE) is one of the best-known builder/architects on Capitol Hill. His work includes Queen Anne-style brick rowhouses (e.g., 824-832 D Street, SE (1892); 638-642 East Capitol Street (1890)). He also built alley dwellings (e.g., Gessford Court). He borrowed to build his houses; when the Depression of 1893 hit (the stock market crashed when U.S. gold reserves fell), he was left with houses no one would buy. He died a year later and was buried at Congressional Cemetery.

Herman R. Howenstein, builder (1877-1955). Howenstein was a major Washington developer. He built many daylighter porch-front rowhouses,

including many on Capitol Hill, beginning in the early 20th century. His rowhouses often have a straight slate mansard roof with a gable dormer. Later, with a partner, he built and owned a number of large apartment buildings, including 1301 and 1321 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, as well as the Wakefield, Potomac Park, Chatham, Highview (2505 13th Street, NW), and the Embassy (1613 Harvard Street, NW). In 1933 and 1934, lenders foreclosed on Highview and the Embassy. The foreclosure sale proceeds were less than the mortgage balances. Howenstein and his partner had personally guaranteed the mortgages and were liable for this deficiency, which they could not pay. As a result, they both went bankrupt in 1935. At that point, Howenstein had \$13.80 in cash plus the stock in H. R. Howenstein Co. (also bankrupt) and owed creditors almost \$400,000. He died in 1955 after a long illness.

Harry A. Kite, builder (1882-1931). He was a prominent Washington developer who built many daylighter porch-front rowhouses all over Washington, as well as apartment buildings (e.g., Kew Gardens, 2700 Q Street, NW).

George T. Santmyers, architect (1889-1960). He studied architec-

ture at the Washington Architecture Club Atelier (1908-1912), worked as a draftsman for Harding & Upman, Washington, DC, and began his own practice in 1914. He designed many apartments and hundreds of rowhouses, including many on Capitol Hill, for Thomas A. Jameson and Harry Kite.

B. Stanley Simmons, architect (1872-1931). He came to Washington as a child, and later studied architecture at M. I. T. He was one of the most prolific architects in Washington, and worked with every major developer, including Harry Wardman and Lester Barr. He started designing and building houses in the 1890s, before he moved on to bigger commissions. His rowhouses at 1345-1363 Constitution Avenue, NE, date from his early career. Simmons designed more than 60 apartment buildings between 1890 and 1926, including The Wyoming (1810 Wyoming Avenue, NW, considered by some to be his masterpiece), and the Embassy and the Highview for Howenstein. He also designed the National Metropolitan Bank, 15th and G Streets, NW (1905); the Barr Building at Farragut Square (1929); the Elks Club, 919 H Street, NW (1908, demolished); and the Fairfax Hotel, 21st and Massachusetts Avenue, NW (1921). ✧

Beyond the Boundaries: 51st Annual Capitol Hill House & Garden Tour (and pub crawl) *continued from page 1*

Not only have we scoped out some of the most amazing properties on the Hill for you to visit, (that we know you haven't seen on any other tour!) but we also have included in the price of your ticket some never before offered bonus activities. Check out the mini-guided walking tours, for example, and learn the history and stories of some of the blocks we will be visiting. Three different tours are being created for our event. These alone are worth the price of admission!

And if that isn't enough, how about joining in on a good old-fashioned Saturday night pub crawl? No, we are not kidding. Many of the restaurants and



129 Elliott Street, NE, part of a trio of houses featured on this block, was constructed in 1912

watering holes along the dynamic H Street corridor are offering drink specials to Saturday evening tour-goers. Look for offers at The Argonaut, The Rock & Roll Hotel, Granville Moore's, and Red and Black, among others, to help
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51ST ANNUAL HOUSE & GARDEN TOUR SCHEDULE

Saturday, May 10th

Candlelight Tour of Houses,
5–8 pm

H Street Pub Crawl

Sunday, May 11th

House Tour, 12 noon–5 pm

Mini Walking Tours

Mother's Day Tea, 2:30–5:30 pm at the
H Street Playhouse, 1365 H St., NE



Top: The H Street Playhouse will be the site of the Sunday afternoon tea, catered by Sova and Café Roma. Above: 232 11th Street, NE, (on the left end of row) is one of three elegant rowhouses



Top left: 102 13th Street, NE, makes the most of an odd-shaped lot, built in 1891 with views of Lincoln Park

Middle left: The Audubon apartment building at 121 13th Street, NE, was built as the Park about 1905

Bottom left: The entrance to one of the older wooden homes on the tour, 528 8th Street, NE. This home and 513 8th Street were part of eight pairs of frame houses built on this square in 1870

Top right: Landmark Lofts at Senate Square is an adaptive reuse of the National Children's Museum. Further back in time, it housed the home for the aged of the Little Sisters of the Poor

2008 TOUR TICKETS

Current CHRS members may purchase 3 discounted member tickets for \$20.00 each. Information on how to order your discounted tickets will be mailed to you soon. Please respond promptly.

Additional tickets purchased before May 10th are \$25.00.

Tickets purchased on May 10-11 are \$30.00.

We accept cash and checks (made payable to CHRS), or you may use PayPal online at www.chrs.org.

Ticket outlets:

- Coldwell Banker/Pardoe, 605 Pennsylvania Ave., SE
- Trover Books, 221 Pennsylvania Ave., SE
- Prudential Carruthers, 216 7th St., SE
- Appalachian Spring, Union Station, East Hall
- Cherry Antiques, 1526 Wisconsin Ave., NW
- Riverby Books, 417 East Capitol St., SE
- Weekend kiosk at Eastern Market

House & Garden Tour (and pub crawl) *continued from page 6*

refresh you as you make your way on the Candlelight Tour.

Snazzy homes, cheap adult beverages, a vibrant urban setting—and all in your own backyard. How chic is that!

On Sunday afternoon, when you need a break from touring the

twelve houses on this year's circuit, you can swing through the H Street Playhouse—a building with landmark designation and the home to Theater Alliance, an award-winning company—and relax with refreshments provided by the Hill's new hot spots Sova and Café Roma. Then get back on the free jitney and set off to see the next home on your self-guided tour. Yes, we know. It is all pretty fabulous.

At CHRS we are very proud of the Beyond the Boundaries survey and education project recently undertaken by our volunteers and their associates. In the greater Capitol Hill area, we are fortunate to have so much of our building fabric intact, and those buildings are rich with details about our history and how our neighborhoods developed. The primary activity of Beyond the Boundaries is a survey of the historic resources in the neighborhoods, which provides information on when buildings were built, who designed them, and how they were constructed.

It is our sincere hope that this year's House and Garden Tour will provide an opportunity to



1121 G Street, NE, and its neighbor were constructed in the mid-nineteenth century with five entrances and extensive backyards

showcase some of the blocks beyond the historic district and create a greater awareness of the wider historical fabric of our Capitol Hill community. Because as we know, *History Has No Boundaries*. ✧

Volunteers Needed!

May 10, 5-8 pm

May 11, noon to 5 pm

Volunteer opportunities:

- Sell tickets in two-hour shifts weekends from April 12th through tour weekend
- Be a docent for two-hour shifts on tour days, May 10th and May 11th
- Accompany the jitneys on tour days to provide information to drivers and riders

Volunteer info available at CapHRS@aol.com or at www.chrs.org. ✧

Looking Back on Capitol Hill

by Nancy Metzger

Sidney Hoffman was born in 1913 and lived with his family at a number of locations on Capitol Hill in both the northeast and southeast quadrants. He attended Eastern High School. Some of his memories of working in the neighborhood theaters were recounted in last month's Looking Back feature. Other excerpts from his oral history interview, conducted by Ev Barnes for the Ruth Ann Overbeck Oral History project, center on his family's times on H Street, NE, and nearby addresses:

We lived over the store on H Street, 1021 was the shoe store and we lived upstairs. And by the way, you did not have a toilet, you had an outhouse. ... We never locked our doors. You associated—whomever you associated, regardless of race or anything else—for example I used to play baseball in the back alley where my father's store was, with the black boys that lived on the side street there. We just played together in that period. ... One day a policeman walks in and tells my father, 'Ben, you know you didn't lock the front door of your store last night?' Nothing happened. ...

Later, Sidney Hoffman's father died, and his mother bought a little car for the family:

I remember that the car was sitting out front, and we heard on the radio that the Senators had won the World Series or something. I went outside, and I was blowing the horn on the car. In the next block, there was a theater called the Empire. Next door to it was an automobile shop. They were selling over the counter. They didn't do repair work or anything like that. They had a radio. Practically the whole area was in front of that store, listening to [that game]. ✧

Meet George W. Utermehle: 19th Century Developer and Capitol Hill Resident

by Amanda Molson

Upon the death of George W. Utermehle on April 16, 1889, the *Evening Star* newspaper noted that Utermehle had “done more to build up the city than any other man, being at the time of his death the largest individual owner of property in the District.” An “old and wealthy citizen,” Utermehle left behind ownership of over 500 buildings across the city and a personal wealth estimated at approximately \$1.5 million.

Utermehle was a native of Germany who arrived in Washington in 1832 and quickly learned the tailoring business. Utermehle used the proceeds from his own small merchant tailoring shop, along with a heavy investment in government bonds, to purchase and develop numerous

properties. Utermehle was recognized in the *Evening Star* as the most extensive builder of houses in Washington when he died at age 73, and he was known as a highly conscientious investor who was current on taxes for all 500 properties under his ownership while still donating frequently to charitable causes. Utermehle lived unostentatiously at his home at 510 Second Street, SE, and died in his residence. An 1887 map shows Utermehle’s large brick residence at the block’s center, surrounded by grounds, and notes his ownership of the entire square.

The battle over Utermehle’s estate was contentious, reaching the United States Supreme Court in 1904 before its conclusion. Utermehle’s grandson, Charles H. Utermehle, accused various family members of coercion in the preparation of the will and asserted that

his grandfather had in fact made repeated reference to provisions intended for inheritance by the younger Utermehle.

George W. Utermehle’s wife, Sarah, continued to live in their residence at 510 Second Street, SE, until her death in 1893. Sarah left their 27-acre Queen Chapel Farm in Washington to the Lutheran Church of the Reformation for use as a home for the aged. After the Utermehle will was finally settled, lots were sold off from the grounds of the estate by the Utermehle descendants. The Utermehle residence itself disappears from maps beginning in 1909.

Utermehle’s obituary noted that he “had great faith in the future of the city and built his fortunes on that basis.” Utermehle was buried at Congressional Cemetery, followed by the interment of his wife. ✧

The Hill on Film

by Mike Canning

Continuing our occasional series about how Hollywood movies have treated elements of Capitol Hill. CHRS Treasurer Canning writes movie reviews for the Hill Rag.

In the last of these columns (February issue), it was noted that among films featuring the Library of Congress, the classic comedy *Born Yesterday* (1950) had an important sequence where two of the leads, Judy Holliday and Bill Holden, viewed actual displays of the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights on the second floor above the Library’s Great Hall. Here, the movies caught a bit of our history, since the founding documents were moved to the National Archives after the latter was finished in 1951. It was a fine example of the movies

catching a glimpse of our neighborhood’s past.

Take a look at *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), a landmark science fiction film of its day, which featured quite a bit of location shooting around the city. One such sequence has army vehicles scurrying around DC preparing to confront aliens. If you look closely, you might spot in one of these sequences the old Peoples Drug Store at 7th and Pennsylvania, SE (now CVS).

Another film with ample DC locations, many of them on the Hill, was the Congressional drama *Advise and Consent* (1962). Locals with long memories will remember the Washington streetcar which used to run down Constitution Avenue, NE, in front of the Senate Office Building. It is that streetcar that makes an appearance in this film, with Charles Laughton riding it.

The Washington comedy *Protocol* (1984), starring Goldie Hawn, did serious shooting here also. Among its locations was the unit block of 9th Street, NE, site of Goldie’s townhouse home in the story. Right after the credit sequence, we see Goldie being driven to that house with her rattletrap car being towed—by a truck from a Gulf station now long gone from Pennsylvania Avenue.

Finally, there is a view in *The Seduction of Joe Tynan* (1979), which we haven’t seen for a while. The opening credit sequence shows a bunch of kids in a bus heading for the Capitol. The bus tools around the city a bit before finally heading up First Street, NE, to enter the Capitol grounds. The shot shows a panorama of those grounds—a view we who live here haven’t seen for years, ever since the Capitol Visitor Center construction began! ✧

Report of the CHRS Zoning Committee

by Gary Peterson

The March 13 meeting was attended by three members of the committee, and was chaired by Mark Eckenweiler. The committee heard three cases and, because there was not a quorum present, the CHRS Board had to approve the report of the committee. One applicant, 731 8th Street SE, disagreed with the committee report and appealed to the Board. The following cases were presented:

#17734 involves the application of Patrick Roman for a variance from the lot occupancy requirements, a variance from the side yard requirements, to allow a two-story rear addition to an existing one-family semi-detached dwelling at 326 D Street, SE (Square 792, Lot 819). The lot area is less than the required 1,800 sq. ft., the owner will keep the three-foot-wide side yard and extend it, and he wishes to go to 74% lot occupancy. The committee voted unanimously to support the lot area and side yard variances and to support an increase in lot occupancy to 70%. The applicant did not meet the test of a variance to go to 74%, and an increase to 70% is permitted

by special exception. The board approved the findings of the committee.

#17739 involves the application of Keith Cross for an area variance, a variance from the lot occupancy requirements, a variance from the rear yard requirements, a variance from the court requirements, and a variance from the nonconforming structure provisions to allow a roof deck above an existing garage serving a one-family row dwelling in the R-4 District at 663 K Street, NE (Square 857, Lot 846). The applicant proposes putting a deck on his garage, provide access by stairs up from the ground floor, and also stairs down from the second floor of his house. He needs variances because his lot is too small by 277 sq. ft.; he wishes to increase his lot occupancy from 84% to 88% where only 60% is allowed; his lot doesn't meet the rear yard requirements; his closed court is half the size it should be; and he is adding to the nonconformity of a nonconforming structure. The committee voted 2 to 1 to oppose the application because there was no evidence to support the test for a variance and the proposed increase in lot coverage is

excessive. The board approved the committee's decision.

#17766 is an application by Barbara Fahs Charles and Robert Staples for a variance from the rear yard requirements, a variance from the side yard requirements, and a variance from the court area and width requirements to allow an addition to an existing commercial building, including a new fourth floor residential apartment, in the CHC/C-2-A zone at 731 8th Street, SE (Square 904, Lot 55). The committee voted to support the side yard requirements and to oppose the other two variances. After a 40 minute presentation by the applicant and supporting testimony from neighbors, the Board voted to support the application in this case because of the preservation of the unique court.

The next Zoning Committee meeting will be held on May 8, 2008 at 7:30 pm. Cases to be considered will include an appeal by ANC 6A regarding AppleTree, and applications for zoning relief involving properties located at 903 North Carolina Avenue, SE, and 728 F Street, NE. All meetings are open to the public, and you are invited to attend. ✧

Council Asked to Adopt NoMA Small Area Plan

by David Holmes

The CHRS Board has voted to urge the City Council to adopt the NoMA Small Area Plan, which was developed by the Office of Planning as the "NoMA Vision Plan and Development Strategy". Council action would give current planning guidelines more regulatory authority.

The Plan would regulate development; form transitional boundaries between the current and projected intense development

(west and north of Union Station) and the residential communities east of the railroad tracks; prevent tear-downs of existing rowhouses; and recommend and promote residential development and adaptive reuse east of First Street, NE.

The area's current zoning districts permit new development north of H Street and west of a line running north between Third and Fourth Streets, NE, to reach heights of up to 65 feet. A developer could also request a Planned Unit Development (PUD) that would

permit a maximum height of up to 90 feet from I Street, NE, to north of L Street, NE, and up to 65 feet high from just north of L Street to Florida Avenue, NE. This potential mountain of structures would be immediately adjacent to the historic rowhouses in the residential area to the east.

The CHRS Board joins Stanton Park Neighborhood Association in advocating this preservation initiative. ✧

April Preservation Café: Repointing Historic Brick Exteriors

If the onset of spring has you thinking about sprucing up the outside of your house, you can pick up some tips about repairing historic masonry at CHRS's April 16 Preservation Café. The program will feature expert Danny Palousek of Pointing Plus, who will talk about *Repointing Historic Brick Exteriors*.

You may have seen Mr. Palousek on *This Old House* in 2006 during a series on renovating an

1879 historic brick rowhouse in Washington's Mt. Vernon Historic District, when he demonstrated his repair of the decorative brick on the house's front facade. This is your chance to hear him discuss, in person, how to go about repointing the brick exterior of your house. In addition to telling members of the audience how to know when their houses need repointing, he will provide critical facts about historic

masonry mortars and go over a repointing and repair checklist for use in hiring a contractor.

Repointing Historic Brick Exteriors will be held on Wednesday, April 16, from 6:30-7:15 pm in the downstairs Community Room at Ebenezer's Coffee House at Second & F Streets, NE. The Preservation Café is free, wheel-chair accessible, and open to all members of the Capitol Hill community. ✧

March Café Provides Tips for Making the Most of Your Basement

by Shauna Holmes

The audience at CHRS's March 19 Preservation Café received a wealth of information about *Making the Most of Your Basement* from longtime Hill resident and architect Judith Capen, author of the *Ask Judith* column in local newspapers. For rowhouse owners wishing for more usable living space, maximizing the potential "down under" is very important.

Ms. Capen led with a recommendation to consider Capitol Hill basements "special needs" spaces because of what they tend to have in common: they're usually short and dark and attract moisture. For comfortable headroom, she advises a minimum ceiling height of eight feet. To provide adequate light and air, as well to comply with code requirements, ensure a minimum of eight square feet of window glazing for every one hundred square feet of floor space, with at least half of that window area openable for ventilation.

Moisture in basements is inevitable because it will travel through walls and many flooring materials, and cooler basements condense the moisture from hot, humid summer air. Homeowners who accept moisture as a given and use strategies to minimize and control it will fare best. Since spores can

feed on almost any building material, including drywall, those who have brick basement walls were advised to keep them unpainted and uncovered so the walls can breathe. If pipes are left uncovered as well, any condensation can evaporate and leaks will be visible and readily available for repair. Ms. Capen recommended tile, concrete, or stone for below-grade flooring rather than materials susceptible to moisture damage, like wood or carpeting.

Life-safety code requirements include adequate egress from sleeping spaces and adequate fire separation between a rental unit and the main part of the house. Because sound reverberates in joist space, soundproofing of some kind is advisable between dwelling units. A rental unit cannot share air conditioning or any other forced air system with the primary living space. To meet code, every dwelling

unit must have at least one room of at least 120 square feet, and no habitable room, except for a kitchen, can be less than seven feet across.

Fixing up a basement for living space is not cheap, so Ms. Capen says it's important to figure out what you want most and then decide if you're willing to pay for it. An architect can help you figure out how to accomplish what you want. There are architects in the Capitol Hill area who can provide a general, "broad strokes" consultation for \$350-500, with more detailed plans available for additional fees. Once you're ready to implement plans, don't forget to be sure you have the necessary permits before work begins.

At the May 21 Preservation Café, Judith Capen will present Part II of *Making the Most of Your Basement*, when she will talk about *Digging Out Your Basement: To Dig or Not to Dig*. ✧

Welcome CHRS Supporters

We thank the following new members, patrons, and sponsors.

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Mark Your Calendar!

APRIL

5 Saturday, 7:00 pm

Peabody School 11th annual Jazz Gala and Auction. St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 3rd & A Streets, SE. All proceeds benefit student development programs. Purchase tickets at Peabody School, 425 C Street, NE, third floor, by phone at 698-3283, or online at www.swsauction.com.

7 Monday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Nancy Metzger, 546-1034.

8 Tuesday, 8:00 pm

Overbeck lecture on "Capitol Hill Row House Designs." Historic restoration expert C. Dudley Brown will discuss the unique character and features of Capitol Hill's historic row houses. His presentation will include a pictorial tour and commentary on the mistakes and misconceptions that have periodically threatened the neighborhood's historic housing stock. Admission is free but reservations are required due to limited seating. Send a message about your attendance to OverbeckLecture@aol.com; you will receive a response only if no more seating is available. Naval Lodge Hall, 330 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE.

15 Tuesday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor. Details: Dick Wolf, 543-4353.

16 Wednesday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Preservation Cafe: Repointing Historic Brick Exteriors. Repointing tips and techniques with masonry expert Danny Palousek of Pointing Plus. Ebenezer's Coffee House, 201 F Street, NE, lower level community room. Event is free and open to the public, no reservations required. Details: Shauna Holmes, 546-5211.

24 Thursday, 10:00 am

Historic Preservation Review Board, 441 4th Street, NW (#1 Judiciary Square), Room 220 south. Details: Nancy Metzger, 546-1034.

26 Saturday, 8:30 am-12:00 pm

Anacostia River cleanup. Join neighbors to clean up trash from the Anacostia. Trash bags, gloves, bottled water supplied for all volunteers.

- Kingman Island, Details: 202-554-1960;
- Kenilworth Park, Details: Kamweti Mutu 301-699-6204;
- Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, Details: Ian Spears 202-454-3384.

MAY

2 Friday, 5:00 pm

Deadline for House Tour mail order ticket sales.

5 Monday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Nancy Metzger, 546-1034.

8 Thursday, 7:30 pm

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

10 Saturday, 5:00-8:00 pm

11 Sunday, noon-5:00 pm

51st Annual CHRS House and Garden Tour (and pub crawl)

Tickets will be available in mid-April at the CHRS kiosk at Eastern Market and various ticket outlets around the city. See story on page 1. Details: CHRS office, 543-0425 or on the web at www.chrs.org.

20 Tuesday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor. Details: Dick Wolf, 543-4353.

21 Wednesday, 6:30 pm

CHRS Preservation Café: Part II of "Making the Most of Your Basement" featuring Hill architect Judith Capen. Discussion will focus on basement dig-out. Details: Shauna Holmes, 546-5211.

22 Thursday, 10:00 am

Historic Preservation Review Board, 441 4th Street, NW (#1 Judiciary Square), Room 220 south. Details: Nancy Metzger, 546-1034.



Capitol Hill Restoration Society

420 Tenth Street, SE
Washington, DC 20003
