



# NEWS

www.chrs.org

May 2010

## May 8 & 9 is House and Garden Tour Weekend

On Mother's Day weekend CHRS will host the 53rd Annual CHRS House & Garden Tour. Our volunteer committee has been working overtime preparing for the Tour,

assuring every little detail is in place for another tremendous tour. Many thanks to the over 150 volunteers who lend a hand throughout the year and on tour weekend!

Twelve homes and a gallery are included on this year's tour. They are diverse in approach, design, and décor, ranging from very modern interiors to traditional Victorian restorations. In several, full rehabs of the home have resulted in masterful uses of space in very contemporary ways that suit a young and growing family. On the other end of that spectrum, one family has updated to prepare for the future when stairs become more of a challenge by adding an elevator. Each home has distinct features such as hand-painted murals in the stairwells, a vibrant top floor greenhouse, or a gallery of historic family photos that introduce the visitor to the previous and current generations.

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*Capitol Hill Restoration Society*

### 53rd Annual House and Garden Tour

May 8-9, 2010

www.chrs.org | caphrs@aol.com | 202-543-0425



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# President's Column: Myths about Streetcars

by Beth Purcell

## **S**econd-best is good enough.

We are entitled to the best street car system. The best system will have excellent engineering, and will be safe and economical. The best system will enhance the city, not detract from it. DC government has yet to make the case that we must settle for second-best and overhead wire clutter. Maybe they can make that case, after they complete the thorough engineering review they have promised. DC has yet to do that work and we are entitled to see the results.

**The tourists are more important than we are.** DC government admits that streetcar wires will detract from seeing the monuments. They plan to build the system so that overhead wires will not block the view on the Mall. We are entitled to a clear view of our own neighborhoods. If you go to parts of DC where there are utility lines, you experience a negative feeling that is hard to describe. It's an imperfect laboratory, but it highlights the "big sky" that we have in the rest of the city.

**DC government is doing a fabulous job.** DC bought several streetcars and began to install track. In the meantime, many other cities are buying streetcar systems, and many more manufacturers are competing for this business. DC government is behaving defensively about this first streetcar purchase. It's understandable, because there may be better systems available now. DC will spend \$1.8 billion for a 37-mile system, to be built over several decades. Just because DC bought a few streetcars from one company, it makes no sense to go on auto-pilot and keep buying them. Again, everyone will need to see how the engineering review turns out. ★

## The Capitol Hill Restoration Society Membership Forum

PHOTO COURTESY ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL



Speaker:

**Stephen T. Ayers**  
Acting\* Architect of the Capitol

Thursday, June 17, 2010

St. Peter's Catholic Church  
313 2nd Street, SE  
Washington, DC

Reception at 7:00 pm  
Business meeting at 7:20 pm  
Remarks at 7:30 pm

\* President Obama officially nominated Mr. Ayers to be the next Architect of the Capitol on Wednesday, February 24, 2010.

## Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

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*House & Garden Tour*  
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### NEWSLETTER

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To reach any of the above, please contact the Society offices at (202) 543-0425 or via e-mail: CapHRS@aol.com.

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 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](http://www.CHRS.org)
- ★ Call (202) 543-0425; 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.

# Reversing Remuddlings the Focus of April Preservation Café

by Shauna Holmes

**R**emuddling, a term often seen in *Old House Journal*, is the practice of “remodeling” a historic building by removing historic features and/or material, changing its historic appearance, altering character-defining elements, or adding historically incompatible features or materials. The April 21 CHRS Preservation Café, *Reversing Remuddlings*, was presented by Nancy Metzger and Judith Capen, both long-term residents of the Hill. Ms. Metzger, chair of the CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, is recognized city-wide as an expert on Capitol Hill's historic architecture, and Ms. Capen, a member of the Historic Preservation Committee, is a noted preservation architect and one of the principals of Architrave, a Capitol Hill architectural firm.

Remuddling is a venerable Capitol Hill tradition, and the speakers didn't have to go far afield to find ample subject matter for their presentation. Ms. Metzger showed examples from her own street, the 600 block of G Street, SE, and both speakers described the un-muddling of their own houses. One home on G Street has a stately French Empire façade that was added to the front of a house that was originally far more modest in appearance. Another single-family home began as two side-by-side townhouses but has morphed over the years into a house that looks bigger than it originally did, has only one front door, and now resembles a New England farmhouse. Nevertheless, the spirit of the original building has been maintained through its windows, door, and clapboard exterior.

A wonderful 1940s photo from the Wymer collection at the

Washington Historical Society showed five houses on the north side of G Street as they appeared near the end of the Capitol Hill Historic District's period of significance (1949). They began life as frame or stucco buildings, and all had side yards and one-story porches of different materials and styles. After showing this photo, Ms. Metzger showed the audience how each has changed in the last 70 or so years.

The easternmost house now looks nothing like it did in the historical photo—there is no porch, and the front façade resembles a typical 1960s effort to look “old” or “traditional” in sort of a Georgetown or Old Town Alexandria way, with brick, shutters, and a Colonial-style door surround. This sort of façade is seen fairly often around the Hill. At house #2, the porch is gone, the brick-style asphalt shingles have been covered or replaced with aluminum siding, shutters have been added, and the front door has been removed and replaced with a window. The entrance is now on the side, very much changing the way the house addresses the street.

House #3 had the most elaborate detailing of the five, with a deep bracketed cornice, elaborate window hoods, German siding on the front, and a gem of a porch. During a 1950s/1960s remuddling, the porch and window hoods were removed, the wood siding was covered with aluminum, and tall windows were replaced with short ones; only the cornice survived. With the addition of a brick retaining wall and wood fence, the house no longer has a welcoming appearance from the

*Continued on page 5*

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# Historic Preservation Briefs

by Nancy Metzger

## **New Location for Historic Preservation Office**

The new address is 1100 Fourth Street, SW, Suite E650. All historic preservation staff phone numbers and contact information remain the same. Amanda Molson is the historic preservation planner for Capitol Hill. Her contact information is 442-8827, amanda.molson@dc.gov. The Office of Planning and the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (for construction and public space permits) are at the same location which is adjacent to the Waterfront-SEU station of the Green Metro line.

## **Call 811 Before You Dig**

Planning to plant a tree in your garden this spring or embark on another kind of excavation? Be sure to call 811 to have underground utility lines in your work area located and marked with bright safety paint or flags before you begin digging. It's the law and it is easy to comply. Call 811 at least two full business days—excluding weekends and holidays—before you are scheduled to begin work. Do not begin digging until you are sure the lines have been marked or cleared as “no conflict.”

## **Conservation Clinic for Archives, Family, Church Photos**

On Saturday, May 15, The Historical Society of Washington, DC (HSW) will host its first Annual Preservation Clinic for religious books, archives, papers and photographs, in cooperation with the Washington Conservation Guild and the Library of Congress. The Preservation Clinic will be held at the Historical Society of Washington, DC, at its Mount Vernon Square headquarters.

Members of the public are invited to make an appointment to consult with professional art conservators from the Washington Conservation Guild. Appointments will be 10 minutes long and the public is encouraged to bring religious group and family photos, books, and papers, for the conservators to view. Guidelines and advice will be given for the care, handling, and proper storage of these materials. Walk-ins are also welcome. Free hand-outs will include conservation material samples and catalogs. In addition, short preservation-related presentations will be held in the HSW theater.

Marlan Green, audiovisual preservation librarian at the Library of Congress, will give a talk and demonstration covering the preservation of audiovisual materials (films, videos, cassettes, etc.). Bryan Draper, on staff at the University of Maryland, will share a display on book binding and repair. A professional paper conservator from the Washington Conservation Guild will give a presentation specifically on the care, handling, and storage of parish archives.

## **Vernacular Architecture Forum Highlights Capitol Hill, Other City and Suburban Neighborhoods**

The Vernacular Architecture Forum, celebrating the architecture of neighborhoods, is meeting in Washington from May 19–23. In addition to tours highlighting a variety of housing types (including Capitol Hill, Virginia's Hollin Hills and Maryland's Greenbelt) the conference will include special events and a full day for papers that address vernacular architecture in its many forms. All conference registrants will receive a copy of the

newly published book of essays – *Housing Washington: Two Centuries of Residential Development and Planning in the National Capital Area* (Richard Longstreth, ed., Center for American Places with the University of Virginia Press, 2009). Additional information and online registration is available at <http://vafweb.org/conferences/2010.html>.

## **New Radio Program on Rehabbing Historic Houses**

Capitol Hill has Judith Capen and her 'Ask Judith' column in the Hill Rag and apparently the nation's radio listeners will soon have a new one-hour national public radio program devoted to historic preservation and rehabbing old houses, "About Your House with Bob & Pat Yapp." A news release said that Bob Yapp of Preservation Resources, Inc. was looking for some pre-arranged callers for the first programs, until the program becomes known well enough to generate callers from week-to-week. Please contact Yapp at [yapperman@msn.com](mailto:yapperman@msn.com) if you've got an old house rehab/preservation question that you'd like him to answer. ★



street. The “new” front of house #4 obscures the original gable roof, though the porch retains a spindle brace from an earlier period. The brick porch columns were replaced about 15 years ago with turned wood columns in keeping with the remaining brace, so this house has started its way back.

House #5 is the Metzgers’ mid-19th-century house, which started out as a two-story home with a gable roof. In 1887 it got new siding (and perhaps a whole new look) and the Wymer photo showed it with an ornamented cornice, window hoods, and cedar shingles above a 1920s style porch. Though aluminum siding was added later and the porch was removed, the house retained its cornice and a door surround that, while not original, is in the spirit of the house’s 19th-century roots.

The Metzgers decided to strip off the “new” siding and return the house to its 1887 appearance, for which they had documentation. Once started, they found their house had several layers: aluminum siding, painted cedar shake shingles, original German siding on the sides and, on the front, 1887 cypress German siding with reeded detail. And once the front façade was stripped down to the 1887 siding, they found on it the “ghosts” of 19th-century wide window and door surrounds and hoods that had been removed. Because of termite damage and paint that was impossible to remove, much of the original siding had to be replaced, but using the original siding as a guide, the Metzgers were able to replicate its appearance exactly. Similarly, using the “ghosts” as guides, they replaced window surrounds and hoods with replicas of their 1887 predecessors.

Judith Capen and her husband, Robert Weinstein, faced a different set of challenges when they bought their rowhouse in 1979. It was one of a set

## Take Back Your Closets! Rescheduled as May 19 Preservation Café

The *Take Back Your Closets!* Preservation Café was originally planned for St. Patrick’s Day, but because the speaker became sick, it has been rescheduled as the May Preservation Café—which means you have another opportunity to hear how to conquer your clutter. If spring cleaning has you feeling overwhelmed and wondering how you’re ever going to get everything organized and keep it neat, come to Take Back Your Closets! on Wednesday, May 19, for creative ideas that will equip you to tackle that clutter and whip it into shape.

Jill Lawrence, of Jill-of-all-Trades Organizing Services, will describe ways to deal effectively with the piles and “overload” that clutter brings into a home. She will share steps to get past that

feeling of not knowing how or where to start and will provide tips for approaching, tackling, and creating functional closets and storage solutions. Jill was the first person in DC to become a Certified Professional Organizer in Chronic Disorganization (CPO-CD), and since 1996 she has been helping people overcome inertia and feeling overwhelmed to create easy, visible, and accessible storage systems.

For tips on managing clutter, go to the CHRS Preservation Café *Take Back Your Closets!* on Wednesday, May 19, at Ebenezers Coffeehouse, 2nd & F Streets, NE, in the downstairs community room. The Preservation Café runs from 6:30–7:15 pm and is free, accessible, and open to all in the Capitol Hill community; no reservations are needed. ★

of six identical houses when built in 1897, with an Italianate hood over the front door, decorative wood cornices with dentils, and tall windows with eyebrows. Its remuddling was not pretty: no more window eyebrows or door hood; short 2nd-story replacement windows with inappropriate multi-paned glass and new shutters; one huge square front first-floor window with tiny panes, covered with an ugly grille; an inappropriate arched front door; and a cornice missing its dentils.

Ms. Capen and Mr. Weinstein un-muddled their house in stages, and because they were young and strapped for cash, they didn’t attempt a strict restoration. Instead, they developed architectural plans and then started a 10-year un-muddling, one step at a time, in affordable and doable increments. First, they pulled off the shutters, the window grille,

and a trellis over the door and then painted the house a red brick color, adding *trompe l’oeil* eyebrows over the upper windows. Later, the upper windows were restored to their original proportions and got proper panes; the big front window got more appropriate glazing and a new wood eyebrow; the dentils were replaced and the cornice restored; and a missing front railing was replaced with a perfect match.

The presentation closed with photos of several other remuddlings that await their undoing: paint attempting to remove itself from brick (never paint pressed brick—it won’t adhere); a stone window sill wishing it weren’t painted; cast iron front steps covered with brick; a sort-of Federal Revival fanlight over the front door of an Italianate house; and a replacement front door whose style does not match the style of the house. ★

There is history with these houses: for example, one was owned for forty years by Lorinda Ann Hooks, a member of the Second Michigan Infantry Regiment during the Civil War. Another was constructed in 1853 by Leonidas Scott, a free black, and subsequently served as rental property for a number of African-American families.

And back yards! Elegant courtyards are becoming a hallmark of Capitol Hill rear yards. Intricate water features with an almost musical quality grace one home. Patios with creative use of stonework to integrate the landscape lend a Zen-like feeling to several other yards. Creative and eclectic outdoor sculptures add a touch of whimsy to another home. One home was featured on the HGTV show *Landscaper's Challenge*.

The tour, which highlights the area between C Street on the south, East Capitol on the north, and is bordered by Third and Eighth Streets, SE, is very walkable. Small rickshaws will be available for those who need a lift between venues; our goal this year was to make it easy for guests to visit all 13 stops without much fuss.

On Sunday afternoon when it is time for refreshment, please join us at the Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church at 201 Fourth Street, SE, sponsored in part by Chuck Berger of Coldwell Banker and Bernie Prince of Fresh Farm Markets.

On tour weekend, tickets will be available at the CHRS booth at Eastern Market and in front of Hill's Kitchen, as well as at several locations around the Hill. Please visit [www.chrs.org](http://www.chrs.org) for those locations.

CHRS would like to thank the key sponsors who support our work by participating in this year's House & Garden Tour: Dick & Mimi Wolf, the National Capital Bank, P&P Construction, Schneiders of Capitol Hill, and Stanton Development Corporation. We also would like to

thank the Adopt-a-House sponsors: Gary Jankowski, Bob Williams, Phyllis Jane Young, Scott Purcell, the Wainger Group, and Fragers.

We also thank the following restaurants for supporting the House

Tour with special offers and discounts for ticket holders: Capitol Hill Tandoor & Grill, Café 8, Matchbox, CAVA, and ZEST. Please visit [www.chrs.org](http://www.chrs.org) for details. ★



PHOTOS COURTESY PAUL CROMWELL

The renovated kitchen at 9 5th Street, SE.



The traditional front and updated glass back wall at 120 4th Street, SE.

# Barney Circle Historic Walking Tour

On April 10, 2010, 30 people participated in Barney Circle Neighborhood Watch Association's free walking tour. Reuben Hameed, a preservation architect, and Beth Purcell led the tour, showcasing the neighborhood's history and architecture.

In 1901, the streetcar line was extended to 17<sup>th</sup> Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, SE; in 1905, the first rowhouses followed at 1501–1511 G Street, SE. Mr. Hameed showed the Flemish bond brickwork on these houses, using illustrations provided to participants.

Barney Circle has two sets of rowhouses designed by the architect Albert Beers. Although Beers is best known for designing rowhouses for Harry Wardman, he also worked with other developers, and designed the continuous-porch houses at 1606–1638 G Street, 532–534 16<sup>th</sup> Street (1907), and 714–722 Kentucky Avenue, SE (1909). The Beers houses on 16<sup>th</sup> and G Streets have “arch bricks” – the bricks in the hottest part of a kiln (the arch) have a more intense color. These houses have a pleasing pattern of bricks in colors ranging from beige to dark brown.

The tour also covered the Mission Style rowhouses at 1615–1641 Potomac Avenue, SE (1912). One of these rowhouses, 1643 Potomac Avenue, was demolished in 2008. Current zoning allows a replacement structure to be 40 feet high.

Tour participants learned about the effect of the Arts and Crafts movement on the design of the 1920s porch front houses. In the 1920s, middle-class home buyers wanted bungalows, popularized by publications such as *The Craftsman*, edited by Gustav Stickley. But, even then, land prices in DC were too high to build detached houses for middle-class buyers. Developers had to

build rowhouses for this market. The challenge was to build rowhouses with bungalow elements.

Rowhouse developers borrowed ideas from *The Craftsman* and other sources. The Barney Circle rowhouses had many Craftsman elements: wide front porches, rear sleeping and breakfast porches, “six-over-one” windows (six panes of glass on the upper sash over one pane on the lower sash), and dormers. Unlike many Victorian rowhouses, these 1920s porch-front houses were only two rooms deep, so that there is natural light in every room. For this reason, they are sometimes called “daylighters.”

Developers likely also borrowed the interior floor plans—a 1905 house plan from *The Craftsman* has the same interior as a typical Barney Circle porch-front house. On the 1600 block of Potomac Avenue, participants saw how developers created a signature style porch-front rowhouse. Thomas A. Jameson (who built 1600–1614 Potomac) used shed dormers (like the roof of a shed), while Herman R. Howenstein, (who built 1616–1628 Potomac) used gable dormers (shaped like the letter “A”).

Tour participants learned that the William Young family once owned much of the land in Barney Circle. The Youngs lived on the bluff overlooking the Anacostia River (now inside Congressional Cemetery), where they had a main house, a smoke house, and four cabins. (These were probably slave cabins—according to the 1790 Census, they owned 10 slaves.) Participants later saw 1600 H Street, SE, once the home of Mr. Christopher Brown, a Tuskegee



A continuous-porch house at 534–536 16<sup>th</sup> Street, SE designed by architect Albert Beers.

Airman. Barney Circle was named for Commodore Joshua Barney, a hero in the U.S. Navy during the Revolutionary War.

In the 1920s, the northwest corner of 17<sup>th</sup> and H Street, SE, had a florist's greenhouse and a monument company, catering to people visiting Congressional Cemetery, located across the street. For this reason, no rowhouses were built here during the 1920s. In 1989, after these businesses were gone, several three-story stucco buildings were built here.

ANC 6B sponsored the historic district application for Barney Circle. There are 192 buildings in the proposed historic district. The boundaries are Barney Circle, 17<sup>th</sup> Street, SE; Potomac Avenue, SE, and Kentucky Avenue, SE. ★



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# Nominees for the CHRS Board of Directors for 2010–11

**T**he Nominating Committee, Paul Cromwell, Barbara Eck, Nancy Metzger and Dick Wolf, has nominated the following individuals to serve on the 2010–2011 CHRS Board. Ballots have been mailed to all CHRS members in good standing as of May 1, 2010.

We thank Rich Luna, the current first vice president, and Elizabeth Nelson, a current Member At Large, for their years of service. Elizabeth will remain on the Board as the Chair of the Community Relations Committee.

## Nominees

**President—Beth Purcell** is completing her first term as President of CHRS. She also continues to chair the Environment Committee whose leadership she assumed five years ago. Her work on the Beyond the Boundaries project has led her to be a co-leader of several recent historic walking tours. She has also helped plant hundreds of trees throughout our Hill neighborhood as president of Trees For Capitol Hill, Inc. and has led Hill neighbors and CHRS Board members in participation in the annual bird count along the Anacostia riverfront. She has been an Orange Hat walker for over 10 years in her Hill East neighborhood. Beth researches and publishes articles on the architecture of eastern Capitol Hill. She is employed as an attorney for the federal government.

**First Vice President—Michelle Pilliod Carroll** was elected to the CHRS Board as an At Large Member one year ago, and has been active in the organization for a number of years. She chaired the House Tour twice, and one of those years her daughter was married on that same Mother’s Day weekend. She does not recommend planning a wedding

and a house tour at the same time. She has also been the major force in organizing the showcase “teas” that are a mainstay of our Mother’s Day House Tour. This year she hopes to establish the “refreshment break” as the proper name since we seldom serve tea anymore. Originally from New York, she came to DC to study at the Corcoran School of Art and George Washington University. She has owned and operated her own business, Pilliod Meeting Planning, for 15 years. She and her husband, Dennis, have lived on Capitol Hill for twelve years.

**Second Vice President—Monte Edwards** was first elected to this post two years ago. The previous year he served as an At Large Member of the CHRS Board. For many years he volunteered for the House Tour and has recently broadened his service to CHRS by testifying on its behalf before the City Council. His engineering and legal background has provided CHRS with invaluable expertise in formulating our position on the introduction of streetcars into the City. He has represented the Stanton Park Neighborhood Association on the Eastern Market Community Advisory Committee (EMCAC) since its inception, and has chaired the Capital Improvements subcommittee since 2000. He has served as EMCAC secretary since 2004 and, in 2000, he chaired the EMCAC Nominations, Credentials, and Membership subcommittee. Monte moved to Capitol Hill in 1984 and rented a house near the burned-out house he had purchased. He served as general contractor of the renovation, had the house gutted and restored, and has resided there since 1985.

**Secretary—Lisa Wilson** was first elected to this position one year ago. While providing exemplary service she also managed to give birth to her first child. Her other work for CHRS has involved helping to develop the House and Garden Tour brochure from 2008 through the present. Lisa moved to Capitol Hill with her husband, Tim McCormack, in 2007 and joined CHRS the same year. A graduate of the University of Michigan, she moved to DC in 2002. She is an attorney in the Solicitor’s Office at the Department of Labor which is a convenient walk from her home.

**Treasurer—Sharon Ivy Weiss** is completing her first term in this office. She has also served on the CHRS Budget Committee and the House and Garden Tour. After working in public accounting for four years, she made a career switch to non-profit accounting and has remained in that field for 14 years. Sharon’s extensive experience in supervising the financial functions of federal grants and contracts in the capacity of Chief Financial Officer for non-profit advocacy organizations has provided CHRS with exceptional advice and assistance. She began working as an independent consultant in 2008 and currently works for several non-profit agencies in DC.

**At Large Candidate (two years)—Donna Hanousek** has been an active member of CHRS for the past 12 years, serving many years on the Historic Preservation Committee and a stint as the CHRS representative to the EMCAC. She has held an At Large seat on the CHRS Board for the past four years and chairs the Beyond the Boundaries Committee that has taken on the Herculean work of



documenting historic neighborhoods just outside the current boundaries of the Capitol Hill Historic District. Previously, she served as a board director for the Friends of the Old Naval Hospital and currently is a member of the DC Preservation League's Landmarks Committee. Donna has a Master's degree in planning and a graduate certificate in historic preservation. She is employed as a Zoning Specialist in the DC Office of Zoning. Her prior positions include Public Space Committee Coordinator for DDOT, Director of Brookland Main Street, historic preservation consultant, and property manager/realtor.

**At Large Candidate (two years)—Shauna Holmes** has served in this position for three years. As an integral member of the Historic Preservation Committee, she manages the CHRS Preservation Cafés and advises the Board on how to participate more actively in historic preservation review of federally assisted projects in the Capitol Hill area. She has also represented CHRS in project consultation, and is a member of the DC Preservation League and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Prior to retiring in 2004, Shauna managed publications, training, awards, and educational outreach for over 21 years, for the President's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. She is committed to working with neighbors and community organizations to protect Capitol Hill's historic integrity and distinctive character. She moved to Capitol Hill with her husband in 1997, joined CHRS and has been an active member ever since.

**At Large Candidate (two years)—Donna F. Barbisch** has worked on the House and Garden Tour and opened her home to the tour in 2009. Donna's involvement with the community

has grown over the years, beginning with her renovation effort of her own home. She is also responsible for the neighborhood adoption of the pocket park at North Carolina and E Street, SE. Donna retired from the Army with the rank of Major General in 2005. She then aligned her business efforts with Global Deterrence Alternatives, LLC, a small business enterprise located on Capitol Hill, that assists government and private entities in building disaster resiliency. She was also instrumental in developing the District's public health emergency planning and speaks widely on the subject. In April 2009, General Barbisch presented a Business Education Seminar on Business Sustainability and Continuity to CHAMPS, and recently became a member of Capitol Hill Village. She resides in a southeast Hill neighborhood with her sister, Phyllis Hoffman.

**At Large Candidate (one year)—Janet Quigley** moved to Capitol Hill in 1995 drawn by its historic character, the old trees, and the convenient location to her work for the Navy Department. A ten-story, glass building proposed for the Medlink Hospital site at Constitution and Seventh Street, NE, ignited her interest in historic preservation and land use. Janet led a large group of neighbors that advocated for historic integrity and appropriate scale in meetings with the DC Historic Preservation Review Board and other city agencies. They joined efforts with CHRS, the Stanton Park Neighborhood Association (SPNA), the ANC, and St. James Church and were successful in persuading the city to downzone the property. She has also served as an ANC Commissioner, a member of the SPNA Land Use Committee, and president of the Stanton Manor condo board. ★

## Welcome CHRS Supporters

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

### NEW MEMBERS

Marie Birnbaum  
Daragh Cassidy  
Jessica Deahl  
Denny Lane & Naoko Aoki

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# Looking Back on Capitol Hill

by Nancy Metzger

In the March newsletter, we took a look into Michael Shiner's diary, now held in the Library of Congress's Manuscript Division, and excerpted some entries about severe wintry weather conditions 150 years ago. Shiner (1805–1880) worked in the Navy Yard, as both a slave and a free man (exact date of emancipation unknown but thought to be about 1840). Shiner recorded in his diary not only some momentous occasions in the life of the nation—the invasion of the British in 1814 and the deaths of noted statesmen, for example—but also, like many other diarists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the happenings of a more heavenly nature as seen in these passages about an eclipse and a comet shower.

## 1831

"The darkest eclipse that ever I saw was in 1831, the 12 of February, on Saturday. It lasted from half past 11 o'clock until half past 3 o'clock. It was so dark at dinner hour in Washington Navy Yard that we had to light the candles to see how to eat in each ordnance room. At that time Mr. [Thomas Sr.] Howard could hardly see how to coal the [illegible]. I never shall forget a remark that a painter made. He said to Mr. Howard that you ought to have a candle now to caul the coal. The painter's name was William Prince, a journeyman painter painting the water casks for the United States frigate *Potomac*, which was fitting out at the Washington Navy Yard. That time they were painting them out in the upper ship house. ... The *Potomac* was fitted out expressly for to go on to Peru and Chile [and] to chastise the desperadoes [who committed acts] on the American merchants ships by the Malays. General Jackson determined to chastise them and bring them to an

honorable term." [Ed.—The cruise of the *Potomac* (1831–34) is famous for its retaliatory strikes against a couple of Malay port cities that had attacked and killed an American crew. The *Potomac* went on to show the flag in Peru and Chile after a number of intermediate stops in China and at various Pacific islands.]

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## 1833

"The meteors fell from the elements the 12 of November 1833 on Thursday in Washington. It frightened the people half to death." [Endnote: "'Shiner was observing the 'Leonid Meteor Shower.' Another observer noted, 'On the night of November 12–13, 1833, a tempest of falling stars broke over the Earth... The sky was scored in every direction with shining tracks and illuminated with majestic fireballs...'"]

In Shiner's diary one can read both of his pride in the work of the Navy Yard, where he was employed in the paint shop, as well as his sometimes caustic observations of the

folly of superior officers. While naval historians remember Captain John A. Dahlgren as a friend of Lincoln and "father of American naval ordnance," Michael Shiner records some no-doubt embarrassing moments in Dahlgren's career.

## 1857

"The arrival of the United States Sloop of War *Plymouth* in front of the US Arsenal at Washington under the command of Captain J. A. Dahlgren with her sails crowded and firing a salute at the same time on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of November 1857 on Wednesday and not the least doubt that being as the channel is narrow she got off track and she got aground.

"And she never got up to the Navy Yard until the 21<sup>st</sup> day of November 1857 on Saturday and Commodore Joseph Smith, Chief of the Yards and Docks, come up in her, and Captain Ingraham, Bureau of Ordnance. When I seen her coming up and her sails crowded and firing a salute my whole soul was filled with joy to see her come up so pretty and when I heard that she was aground my feather fell."

## 1858

"The arrival of the United States Sloop of War *Plymouth* at Washington under the command of Captain J.A. Dahlgren the 8<sup>th</sup> day of December 1858 on Wednesday and in coming up to the Navy Yard she got aground below the old Sugar House and there she remained. The United States Sloop of War *Plymouth* was got off on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of December 1858 on Thursday and arrived at the Navy Yard.

"The United States Sloop of War *Plymouth* left the Washington Navy Yard under the command of Lieutenant Murray of Ordnance on

## Did You Know?

- ★ **The city has presented plans to ANC 6A for traffic changes to C Street, NE**, where westbound traffic comes into Capitol Hill after crossing the East Capitol Street Bridge. Residents have long complained about excessive speed, particularly since students cross the street en route to Eliot-Hine Junior High. After presentation of three alternatives, the ANC's transportation committee was asked to list preferences for various modes of traffic calming. Among the choices were changing traffic lanes to cycle tracks, chicanes (winding traffic lanes within the current roadway), bulb-out pedestrian crossings (designed to shorten the distance, currently 90 feet, a pedestrian is exposed to on-coming traffic and to create a visual barricade to speeding traffic), restricting turns, restricting rush hour parking on the north side, and the removal of traffic lanes. The plans can be seen at <http://tinyurl.com/24gswug>.
- ★ **The DC Office of Planning/Historic Preservation Office will offer "Historic DC Building Permit Database" training sessions** facilitated by historian/researcher Brian Kraft at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Public Memorial Library at 3:00 and 6:30 on Tuesday, June 1. Kraft, a contractor working with the DC Historic Preservation Office, has developed an easily searchable Microsoft Access Database of "to build" permits issued by the District of Columbia from 1877 through 1959. Following the training, each participant will receive a copy of the database and manual. Each class is limited to 18 participants. To register for the training sessions, please RSVP to Bruce Yarnall, at 442-8835 or [bruce.yarnall@dc.gov](mailto:bruce.yarnall@dc.gov) by May 21. Please indicate which session you are interested in attending—3:00 pm or 6:30 pm.

the 28<sup>th</sup> day of December 1858 on Tuesday and was towed out by the United States Steamer *Dispatch*. And she never got off until the 29<sup>th</sup> day of December 1858 on Wednesday.

"If they had of minded what that lad of a boy said they would not run aground. I am not pretending to dictate but I think it would be wise for the government to employ some of the young men that was raised about those wharfs for pilots in they know every inch of the Channel."

Special recognition must be given to John G. Sharp who finished a transcription of the Diary in 2007, since it was previously difficult for

the public to fully appreciate Michael Shiner's diary as it was naturally a hand-written document and the spelling and punctuation are not standardized. In the passages cited above, I've changed the spelling and punctuation to facilitate ease of reading; however, the words and expressions are those of Michael Shiner. The complete transcription with introduction and end notes is accessible through the Navy Department Library and is found on <http://www.history.navy.mil/library/onliner/shinerdiary.html>. ★

## Get Ready for Summer Farmers Markets

### H Street FRESHFARM Market

May 1–October 30  
Saturdays, 9 am–noon  
625 H Street, NE (parking lot directly across from the H Street Self Storage)

The H Street FRESHFARM Market is a partnership project with the H Street Main Street Program and the DC Office of Planning. Every Saturday, the farmers at H Street bring their local, seasonal products including handmade cows' milk cheeses, yogurt, organic and grass-fed meats, fruits, vegetables, eggs, pastries, sorbets, ice creams, flowers and more. Farmers/producers include: Atwater's Bakery, Blueberry Hill, Cedarbrook Farm, Clear Spring Creamery, Dolcezza Gelato & Sorbet, Garden Path Farm, Keswick Creamery, Quaker Valley F&O, Richfield Farm.

### New Capitol Riverfront Market

May 6–November 18  
Thursdays, 3–7 pm  
Intersection of New Jersey Avenue and M Street, SE, adjacent to the Navy Yard Metro (New Jersey Avenue exit). Market entrance on M Street, SE.

The Capitol Riverfront Business Improvement District and Diverse Markets Management present the new Capitol Riverfront Market, offering fresh produce and locally prepared foods. The marketplace features over ten local farmers and vendors selling fresh fruits and vegetables, breads and baked goods, herbs and spices, pickles, olive oil, jams, honey, desserts, flowers, prepared foods, and more.

### U.S. Department of Transportation Farmers Market

May–November  
Tuesdays, 10 am–2 pm  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
(Navy Yard Metro) ★





**Capitol Hill Restoration Society**  
420 Tenth Street, SE  
Washington, DC 20003

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## Mark Your Calendar!

### MAY

**3** Monday, 6:30 pm  
CHRS Historic Preservation Committee,  
Kirby House, 420 10<sup>th</sup> Street, SE, first floor.  
Details: Nancy Metzger, 546-1034.

**8–9** Saturday & Sunday  
CHRS Annual House and Garden Tour.  
Tickets available at [www.chrs.org](http://www.chrs.org)

**18** Tuesday, 6:30 pm  
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill  
Townhomes, 750 6<sup>th</sup> Street, SE, second  
floor. Details: Beth Purcell, 622-4303.

**19** Wednesday, 6:30–7:15 pm  
CHRS Preservation Café on de-cluttering:  
*Take Back Your Closets!* with Jill Lawrence  
from Jill-of-all-Trades Professional  
Organizing Services. Ebenezers  
Coffeehouse, 2<sup>nd</sup> & F Streets, NE,  
downstairs. Free, no reservation required.  
Details: Shauna Holmes, 546-5211.

**27** Thursday, 10:00 am  
Historic Preservation Review Board,  
441 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Room 220 South.  
Details: Nancy Metzger, 546-1034.

### JUNE

**7** Monday, 6:30 pm  
CHRS Historic Preservation Committee,  
Kirby House, 420 10<sup>th</sup> Street, SE, first floor.  
Details: Nancy Metzger, 546-1034.

**15** Tuesday, 6:30 pm  
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill  
Townhomes, 750 6<sup>th</sup> Street, SE, second  
floor. Details: Beth Purcell, 622-4303.

**17** Thursday, 7:00 pm  
CHRS Community Forum: Mr. Stephen T.  
Ayers, Acting Architect of the Capitol will  
be the keynote speaker. The event is free,  
and the public is encouraged to attend.  
Reservations are not needed. St. Peter's  
Church Hall at 2<sup>nd</sup> & C Streets, SE.  
Refreshments will be served at 7:00 pm;  
business meeting at 7:20 pm; Forum  
begins promptly at 7:30 pm.

**24** Thursday, 10:00 am  
Historic Preservation Review Board,  
441 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Room 220 South.  
Details: Nancy Metzger, 546-1034.

Saturdays, May 1–October 30  
9 am–noon (rain or shine)  
H Street NE Freshfarm Market,  
625 H Street, NE (across from H Street  
Self Storage). Fresh fruits and vegetables,  
pasture-raised meats, local dairy, breads  
and baked goods, cut flowers and more.  
[www.freshfarmmarkets.org](http://www.freshfarmmarkets.org)