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November 2011

CHRS Submits Scoping Comments for the CSX Tunnel's Environmental Assessment

By Shauna Holmes

Last summer most Capitol Hill residents received letters from CSX about its plans to rebuild and expand its 107-year-old Virginia Avenue Tunnel so CSX can operate double-stacked intermodal container freight trains on two tracks through the tunnel. Because the project needs permits that will entail oversight and approval from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), it requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as well as historic preservation review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

The public scoping phase of an EA is intended to ensure that problems are identified early and properly studied during

environmental review. Accordingly, there was a 30-day public comment period from September 14 through October 14, during which CHRS submitted formal scoping comments to FHWA, DDOT, cooperating agencies, and CSX. Because the project is huge in scope and scale, spanning Capitol Hill from 2nd to 11th Streets, SE, it has the potential for substantial environmental and community impacts. Not surprisingly, CHRS's comments identified many areas of concern about the number, seriousness, and scope of the impacts the project would have on Capitol Hill residents, neighborhoods, historic and natural resources, and businesses.

With a number of other construction projects in the tunnel's

vicinity—including the DC Water Combined Sewer Overflow Control projects, the 11th Street Bridge project, the Canal Park project, the South Capitol Street project, and other CSX projects in Southeast and Southwest DC—the need for careful planning and coordination with other nearby projects topped CHRS's list of concerns.

Because the project will span the Capitol Hill Historic District and lies wholly within the area encompassed

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CHRS December Membership Forum on CSX Virginia Avenue Tunnel Project

Friday, December 9, 2011

Doors open 6:30 pm; program begins at 7:00 pm

Hill Center (Old Naval Hospital), 921 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE

A representative from CSX will make a presentation about this major project and answer questions from the community. The event is free and open to the public. For more details, please contact: CapHRS@aol.com.

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President's Column: Bridge and Tunnel Crowd

By Beth Purcell

The “bridge and tunnel crowd” is a derogatory term that New Yorkers use for out-of-towners coming into the city. In a different sense, all of us on Capitol Hill are part of a bridge and tunnel crowd. We currently have two major bridge construction projects—the South Capitol Street Bridge, and the 11th Street Bridges (the largest project that DDOT has undertaken).

We also have two major tunnel projects. DC Water and Sewer Authority (WASA, also known as DC Water) is building a system of large tunnels and diversion sewers to end the water pollution from combined sewage outflows. A large part of DC has “combined sewers,” which sounds boring but is actually disgusting and frightening. Sewers carry waste from toilets to the Blue Plains Treatment plant. Sewers also carry stormwater run-off to Blue Plains. The problem is that both types of waste water are in the same sewers (the combined sewers). So, whenever there is a big rainstorm, the sewers cannot handle the high volume of toilet water and stormwater run-off, and as a result, all this wastewater (including raw sewage) flows into the Anacostia River (instead of going to Blue Plains). Combined sewage outflows empty directly into the river from concrete pipes at multiple points, including several on Capitol Hill.

Pollution from water run-off is the number one threat to the Anacostia River. WASA entered into a consent decree in federal court to implement a long-term control plan for the city's combined sewer system. WASA is building a system of large tunnels to handle the waste-water and run-off. The new tunnels will store the water, which will later be pumped to Blue Plains for treatment.

Combined sewage outflows into the river should be reduced by 98%. One of the tunnels is under construction near RFK Stadium. If you visit, you can get an idea of the large size of these tunnels. The RFK tunnel is scheduled to be completed in August 2013.

There is a second massive tunnel project on Capitol Hill, the CSX Virginia Avenue rail tunnel. The Virginia Avenue tunnel runs 4,000 feet under Virginia Avenue, SE from 2nd Street to 11th Street. The current tunnel (built in 1872 and 1904) is a single-track tunnel and a major bottleneck. CSX says the tunnel needs to be expanded to two tracks and heightened to handle double-stacked intermodal container freight trains.

We understand that the expanded tunnel will be constructed using this method: The soil and street pavement will be removed, a temporary road surface will be constructed over the trench/new tunnel, and a temporary surface-level run-around railroad track will be constructed near Virginia Avenue so the trains can continue running during construction. This “cut-and-cover” method was used to construct the Metrorail tunnels. As set out in an article in this issue of the News, this project raises many environmental and historic preservation issues. CHRS is working with other community organizations, CSX, and government to minimize the adverse effects from this project. ★

Reserve Now for Nov. 8 Overbeck Lecture: “The Captain Who Burned His Ships”

On Tuesday, November 8, local author **Gordon S. Brown** will deliver an Overbeck History Lecture on the growth of the Washington Navy Yard under its first commandant, Captain Thomas Tingey, and the terrible choice he faced during the British invasion of 1814.

Based on his new book, *The Captain Who Burned His Ships*, Brown will trace the Yard's history during the quarter century of Tingey's command—a period when part of our neighborhood was known to many as Navy Yard Hill. For most of the past two hundred years, in fact, the Yard was a larger employer than the U.S. Congress and a dominant factor in Capitol Hill's social and economic life.

A retired diplomat, Gordon Brown has authored several other books, including *Incidental Architect*, on William Thornton and his influence on early Washington cultural history. He had a 35-year career in the U.S. Foreign Service, where his many postings included director of Arab Gulf Affairs in the State Department, political advisor to General Norman Schwarzkopf during the 1991 Gulf War, and ambassador to Mauritania.

The lecture is scheduled for **Tuesday, November 8, at 8:00 p.m. at the Naval Lodge Hall at 330 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE**. As usual, admission is free but a reservation is required due to limited seating. Please email OverbeckLecture@CapitolHillHistory.org, giving your name and the number of seats you will need.

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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 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.

To start or renew a CHRS membership:

- ★ On the web at 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.

Zoning Briefs

By Gary Peterson

The Zoning committee met on October 13, 2011, and took the following actions.

18265. Application of Nathan Darling for special exception to allow an addition to an existing one-family row house not meeting the lot occupancy, court, and nonconforming structure requirements. The property is zoned R-4 and is located at 644 C Street, NE. Darling proposes adding a rear two-story addition on top of an existing one-story structure. The addition will not change the lot occupancy of 69.7% (increases between 60% and 70% allowed with special exception) but will extend upwards an existing 4.9 foot court (6 feet required). The lot is also substandard because it is only 16 feet wide. The house on the east of the property is 3-story and the one on the west is two. The rear addition will line up with the back wall of the house on the west. Both neighbors have submitted letters of support. The committee voted unanimously to support the application.

18266. Application of Melissa and Joseph Boyette for special exception to allow a rear addition to an existing one-family row house not meeting the lot occupancy, rear yard and nonconforming structure requirements. The property is located at 1317 D Street, NE, and is zoned R-4. The applicants propose removing a two-story back porch from the house, demolishing a substandard garage, and adding a 3-story addition roughly in place of the porch. Parking will remain in the rear. In this case the lot occupancy will be reduced from 77.5% to 67.2% and the rear yard will be increased from 1 foot to 18 feet (20 feet required). The lot is 18 feet wide but

contains only 1238 square feet (1800 required). These are the basis for the special exceptions. The applicant provided letters of support from the neighbors. The impact on the neighbor's sunlight is slight because the front of the properties face north. The committee voted unanimously to support the applications.

18267. Application of Suzanne A. Ham for a special exception to allow for a massage establishment. The property is located at 513 Capitol Court, NE, Suite 200, and is zoned C-2-A. Ham has opened Creative Hands Massage and Therapies at this location and offers massage, acupuncture, skin care and physical therapy. She also offers massage at Union Station. In order to get an occupancy permit and a business license she needs a special exception to offer the massage services at this location. (She doesn't need this at Union Station because it is federal property.) Ham lives in the same square and presented letters of support from neighbors. The committee voted unanimously to support her application.

18263. Application of Stephanie and John Lester for special exceptions to allow a rear addition and construction of a two-story garage with an apartment on the second floor not meeting the lot occupancy requirements, the rear yard requirements and the open court requirements. The property is improved with a 3-story house that has a walkout basement at the rear. Currently there is no garage. The drop in grade from C Street to the alley (Rumsey Court) is such that the floor of the garage is at grade with Rumsey Court but is almost 4

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Square 1060: King's Court and 14½ Street, SE— History of a Hill East Alley

This past Fall, Beth Purcell and Donna Hanousek led a tour of Hill East alleys where once there were dwellings; this is the history of one—King's Court/14½ Street, SE.

Square 1060 has two interior streets: King's Court, SE (east to west) and 14½ Street, SE (north to south). We have found no building permits for alley dwellings in Square 1060. At the peak, in 1893 or earlier, there were 11 frame alley dwellings. We have been unable to determine who King's Court is named for.

Number 1–8 (1401–1415) King's Court—Alley Development

These were eight one-story frame dwellings, configured as four duplexes, on lot 15 (8,440 square feet). A 1911 repair permit shows them as #1–8 King's Court, but on the 1910 Census they appear as 1401–1415 King's Court. Lot 15 shows improvements valued at \$800 on the 1889–1890 real property tax assessment. From the 1903 Baist map, it appears that each house was approximately 12 x 30 feet. Fuel sheds on lot 15 were repaired in 1901, and the dwellings themselves were repaired in 1911. The 1910 Census shows eight occupied dwellings (1401–1415 King's Court). The Monday Evening Club (a reform organization called the "housing committee," that compiled a directory of alleys and reported on the conditions in inhabited alleys) counted nine alley dwellings in King's Court in 1912. See below regarding 214 14½ Street, SE.

All eight dwellings disappeared by 1928. The 1917–1918 tax assessment shows improvements on lot 15 valued at \$1,200. By the 1921–1922 assessment, the ownership of lot 15 had changed, and the value



PHOTO COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON

Donna Hanousek (back to camera) and Beth Purcell with the tour group at King's Court.

of the improvements on that lot had increased to \$5,000. This suggests that the frame dwellings had been replaced with a more valuable improvement sometime between 1917 and 1921.

Between 1889 and 1917, the eight dwellings on lot 15 were owned by Major Alfred M. Palmer, U.S. Army. A repair permit he obtained in 1911 states that these houses were rented to black families.

14½ Street—Alley Development

Lot 8 in Square 1060 had three frame alley dwellings on 14½ Street, SE, as of 1889.

Two parcels in lot 8, each 1,320 square feet, had attached frame dwelling, each valued at \$200 in 1889–1890. The frontage on the alley was 16.5 feet. In the 1902–1903 real property tax assessment, there are improvements valued at \$100 on each parcel, but the 1908–1909 assessment shows no improvements on either

lot. The disappearance of these two dwellings is indirectly confirmed by The Monday Evening Club's count of nine alley dwellings in King's Court in 1912 (the eight dwellings on lot 15 at King's Court existing in 1912; and the 9th alley dwelling would have been 214 14½ Street, described below). The 1928 Sanborn map shows no dwellings on either of the 1,320 square foot parcels.

Another parcel in lot 8, 214 14½ Street, SE, with 2,360 square feet, also had a frame dwelling valued at \$200 in the assessment for 1902–1903. This alley dwelling was owned by George White, a black man who lived in the house with his family as of 1900. He appears as the owner on the assessments for 1889–1931. His house appears on the 1928 Sanborn map, but not on the 1938 Sanborn map. Mr. White was one of only two alley home owners in Hill East, and as we

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Beyond the Boundaries: Call to Members for Greater Capitol Hill History Information

CHRS has contracted with EHT Traceries for preparation of a context study of greater Capitol Hill—the areas just outside the Capitol Hill Historic District.* The context study is a companion to the individual building survey completed last year. It will analyze all the existing historic information, including the database and research findings from that study, together with additional new research, as needed, to create the complete development story for greater Capitol Hill.

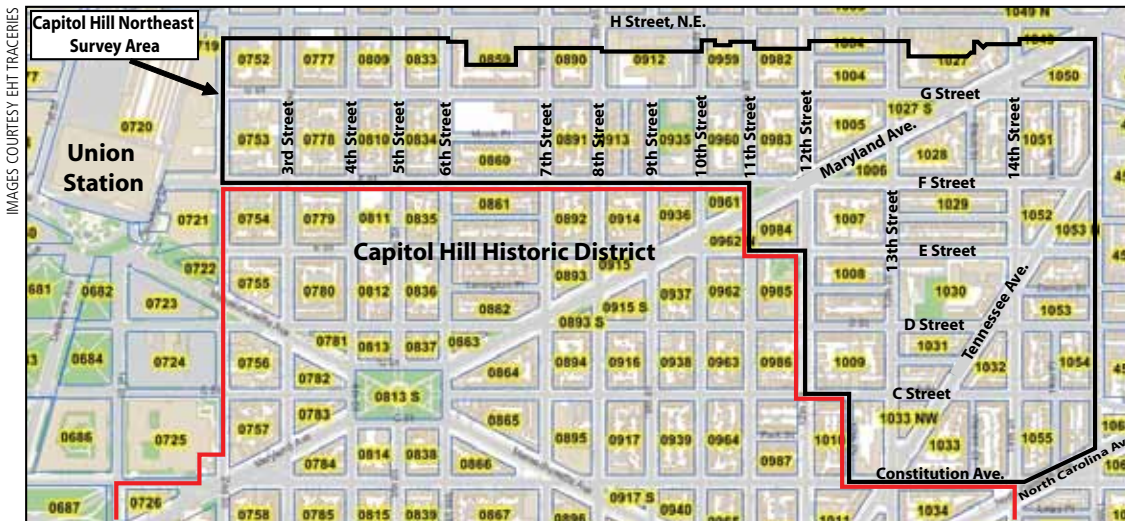
According to the agreement, the end product will be a "...statement context and background history, with a defined theme, geographic parameters, and temporal limits. The study will develop a theme or area(s) of significance, determining if the significance is local/state and/or national, and identify the associated property types. It is anticipated this historic context study will serve as the necessary documentation for a National Register nomination, if desired by the community in the

future. Recommendations will attempt to define the applicable National Register Criteria and identify boundaries for expanding the existing Capitol Hill Historic District and/or creating additional historic district(s). An annotated bibliography will be prepared. The study will include images such as maps, historic images, and current pictures as necessary."

If you either live in greater Capitol Hill, or just have historic information about it, please contribute

your historic photos, articles, or stories to the study to help ensure that we have the most comprehensive document possible.

You can send information electronically to CapHRS@aol.com, or mail or drop off hard copies to our office at: 420 10th Street, SE (basement), until December 31st. (You can call Gloria at 543-0425 for drop-off arrangements.) *



* The approximate study boundaries are H Street/Benning Road to the north; SE/SW Freeway to the south; 2nd Street, NE to the west, and 19th Street and the Anacostia River to the east.

Beyond the Boundaries areas in Capitol Hill northeast (top) and southeast (bottom).

IMAGES COURTESY EHT TRACERIES

October Preservation Café Featured Introduction to Green Roofs

By Amanda Molson

Attendees braved the evening rain to enjoy October's Preservation Café, which featured an introduction to green roofs. CHRS welcomed speakers Maurice Walters, a local architect and Hill resident, and Scott Titanish of Riverbend Nursery. Walters shared design considerations and his own experience with installing a green roof, while Titanish, whose company is a licensed grower for LiveRoof, discussed the technical aspects of selecting a product and maintaining plant matter.

Benefits

Green roofs offer numerous benefits to both the homeowner and the larger community. Immediate benefits to the property owner and abutting neighbors can include a reduction in the "urban heat island" effect in which roof decking holds heat, a situation that is compounded on the roofs of closely-built rowhouses like ours. A green roof can hold the ambient temperature of the roof to 95 degrees, lowering cooling costs in the summer by up to 50%. The system can also block the UV rays that break down roof membranes over time, reduce noise, and protect the roof membrane from damage caused by hail and small tree branches.

Green roofs offer significant stormwater management benefits to the city. Approximately one-third of the District's land is served by a combined sewer system that carries both waste and stormwater runoff. If these pipes reach capacity during a major rainstorm, overflow can enter the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers. With so much of our urban landscape paved with streets and sidewalks and the footprint of buildings,



PHOTO COURTESY MAURICE WALTERS

Example of a green roof.

stormwater quickly pours into the city's sewers. Green roofs slow the flow of rain by holding and using the water, thereby sending less water into the sewer system. The effect could be considerable with widespread installation of green roofs in the District.

Technology

So-called "extensive systems", which provide a soil depth of 6" or less, are well suited to residential use. Cost varies but can run from \$7 per square foot for a system installed on your own, up to \$25 per square foot for a system installed by a professional. Plant modules are installed in containers placed over a waterproof membrane. The plants may be installed in place for you to tend to maturity, or they may arrive already fully grown for immediate visual impact and a greater variety of plant matter.

Titanish addressed the issue of post-installation maintenance, recommending that the plants be cut back once in the spring to encourage

a more robust system. Monthly weeding is important to ensure that seeds dropped by birds don't infiltrate the system with weeds or tree seedlings. Although the plants are quite happy just taking in rain most of the year, access to water will also be necessary for our hotter and drier months. The plants should be fertilized only if recommended and following soil testing. Organic fertilizers can harm green roofs because they flow out of the system so quickly, making a 14-14-14 fertilizer the better option for slower flushing.

Planning

Both speakers stressed the importance of proper planning, which may include evaluation of the existing roof system by a structural engineer or architect. The structural capacity of residential roof systems, especially those found in our historic homes, may not support the additional load of a green roof without modifications. As a result, green roofs may be best installed as part of a larger project

already planned that will necessitate structural improvements.

In addition to the plant matter itself, increased weight comes from saturated soil and roots, people who are enjoying and maintaining the green roof, and any decking and furniture that is desired for a seating area. Other design considerations should include accessibility to the roof and any related visibility issues that may arise, given the importance of maintaining historic character. If lighting is desired, homeowners need to plan for electricity. And, of course, proper permits should be obtained prior to commencing work.

A popular option, which can be seen at several homes on Capitol Hill, is installing a green roof system on a garage. Any structural work would likely be less invasive than making these changes in a living space, and the small size and easy accessibility to the roof of a one-story garage provide additional conveniences. The book *Small Green Roofs: Low-Tech Options*

for *Greener Living* (Timber Press, 2011) may be helpful as it specifically addresses green roofs on sheds, garages, detached studios, and other small structures.

Incentives

A number of financial incentives are available to support the installation of green roofs. The website for the Anacostia Watershed Society (www.anacostiaws.org) provides an overview of green roof rebates offered by the city. The website for the DC Department of the Environment (www.ddoe.dc.gov) includes information on a proposed stormwater fee discount program available to District property owners who install green practices that retain stormwater run-off.

DDOE also offers incentives for the introduction of other stormwater management practices, such as planting shade trees, installing rain barrels, and replacing impervious paving with pervious pavers. ★

Welcome CHRS Supporters

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

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November Preservation Café to Feature Demonstrations of Faux Finishing Techniques

Following on her September Preservation Café about faux finishes and decorative painting, Carol Beach, a DC architect, will return for CHRS's November 16 Preservation Café to demonstrate several techniques she showed and discussed in September. Even if you missed her then, don't pass up this opportunity to see Ms. Beach demonstrate how to apply three kinds of faux finishes: stenciling, glazing, and gilding. She will also bring completed examples of each kind of finish. Faux (meaning fake) finishes and painting can be used to create the illusion of architectural elements, objects, or different materials.

Faux Finishes: Hands-On Demonstration will be held Wednesday, November 16, from 6:30–7:15 pm at Ebenezers Coffeehouse, 2nd and F Streets, NE, downstairs. The Preservation Café is free, accessible, and open to all in the Capitol Hill community.

by the L'Enfant Plan for the City of Washington, CHRS also expressed serious concerns about adverse effects on many historic properties, including Virginia Avenue Park being used as a construction staging area. Of particular concern is the potential for vibrations from demolition, construction, and the proposed run-around track to cause structural damage to fragile historic buildings near the project area. CHRS made it clear this is not an idle concern, stressing that many historic buildings on the Hill suffered interior and exterior damage from the recent earthquake and that historic houses on D Street, SE, were damaged due to underground subway construction. Further, some houses on F Street, NE, were damaged by vibrations when a bus line was shifted to F Street. CHRS recommended detailed engineering studies for every stage of the project, pre-construction development of measures to avoid or minimize vibration impacts, frequent monitoring during construction, and a plan of action to be immediately implemented if vibration damage is noted.

CHRS also raised concerns about noise from demolition, construction, and the run-around track in and around the construction area, as well as noise from a steady procession of dump trucks hauling dirt away. With many, many cubic yards of material being excavated and moved, CHRS also noted air quality issues such as dust and the possibility of hazardous substances in excavated materials. CHRS comments recommended pre-removal testing and other measures to eliminate or reduce the dangers toxic materials could pose, along with measures to minimize dust in the area from earth-moving activities.

Additional concerns about construction impacts that were brought up in the scoping comments

More Tools for Community Toolboxes: How to Be Heard During Federal Project Reviews

Two sets of federal regulatory processes provide tools for citizens to alert the government about their concerns and to influence decisions about projects that affect them: environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and historic preservation review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Two Capitol Hill projects are now undergoing these reviews: the CSX Virginia Avenue Tunnel Project and Union Station's Main Hall Project. (Several other Capitol Hill projects—the South Capitol Street Project, the 11th Street Bridge Project, and the Verizon Cell Tower Project at Eastern Market Metro plaza—have also been reviewed under these regulations.) These reviews are conducted when a federal agency carries out or assists a project by providing funds, approvals, licenses, or permits. While both of these processes include opportunities for public participation and input, many Capitol Hill residents and business owners don't know how these reviews work or how to use them to make their voices heard.

To equip our community to participate more knowledgeably in project reviews, CHRS is holding a free November 14 public workshop, *How to Be Heard During Federal Project Reviews*, so members of the Capitol Hill community will understand how these reviews take place and how to participate in them to make their concerns known. Peter Byrne, a Capitol Hill resident and professor at Georgetown University's Environmental Law and Policy Institute, will brief the audience on NEPA environmental review and how and when the public can have a voice in it. Shauna Holmes, a Capitol Hill resident who for many years managed the Section 106 training program for the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, will give an overview of the federal historic preservation review process and its opportunities for public participation.

How to Be Heard During Federal Project Reviews will be held Monday, November 14, at the Hill Center, 921 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, from 7:00–9:00 pm; doors will open at 6:45 pm. The workshop is free and open to all in the Capitol Hill community, so alert your friends and neighbors. Reservations are not necessary, but if you plan to attend, please let CHRS know at CapHRS@aol.com or by calling 202-543-0425 so enough handouts can be prepared.

included stormwater drainage in the construction area; duration and timing of construction hours; economic impacts on Barracks Row Main Street and other nearby businesses; parking; location and operation of the proposed run-around track; rodent control; impacts on utility lines, piping, and

services; environmental justice; traffic, pedestrian, cycling, and public transportation impacts; and location of construction offices, equipment, supplies, staging, and laydown areas. Regarding post-construction impacts, CHRS raised questions about the effects on historic buildings and freeway foundations



Current CSX tunnel at New Jersey Avenue where two tracks merge to one.

of running much larger and heavier trains in the new tunnel, sometimes simultaneously on two tracks.

For long-term protection of the Anacostia River watershed, CHRS also offered a number of recommendations regarding streetscape restoration and landscaping after the tunnel is completed, suggesting types of soil and street trees as well as permeable surfaces wherever possible. CHRS also requested full and frequent communication and dialog with the community before and during construction and hotlines and/or websites for reporting problems.

The CHRS scoping comments ended with a question: Given the major scale and scope of this project and its many significant impacts on the quality of the human environment, why isn't an Environmental Impact Statement being conducted, rather than an Environmental Assessment, which is a less extensive analysis? We look forward to learning the outcome of the scoping process and the next public meeting, which

according to the schedule at www.virginiaavenuetunnel.com will be a public design concepts meeting in Fall 2011.

To read the CHRS scoping comments, go to the CHRS website at www.chrs.org, click on the CSX Tunnel link on the left side of the home page, and then click on the link for the scoping comments. ★

Zoning Briefs, continued from page 3

feet below grade on the yard side. Ordinarily, a garage can be 15 feet tall, however, the elevation of the garage is measured from the wall facing the house and this allows a structure of 19 feet as a matter of right. A second floor is not allowed as a matter of right but a mezzanine is allowed. The applicant proposes to make additions to the second and third floors of the house and to construct an accessory building with parking on the first floor and an apartment on the second floor. To dodge the Zoning Code's prohibition against having more than one dwelling on a lot for human habitation the applicant, at the Office of Planning's suggestion, is connecting the two buildings by a path covered by a trellis. They argue that this makes it all one building. Two neighbors attended the meeting and opposed the application. The committee voted unanimously to oppose the application. ★



2nd Annual CHRS Fun Fall Auction

Tuesday, November 29 • 7:00 pm
Hill Center (Old Naval Hospital)

CHRS will once again be hosting a Fun Fall Auction! We are now accepting auction items. We are looking for weekend getaways, original art, rare books, furniture, kitchen and household items, etc. All items that are donated are tax deductible.

To make a donation, please contact Michelle Carroll at: pilliodmp@aol.com or (202) 544-7900.

We look forward to seeing you at the Fun Fall Auction!



Looking Back On Capitol Hill

By Nancy Metzger

As the days and nights grow colder, we are reminded to have the furnace checked and perhaps lay in a supply of firewood. In the 19th century, before furnaces and radiators became the important heating systems, a Latrobe stove was not only an object supplying warmth but one of beauty as well. Although most have been removed from Capitol Hill houses, long-time preservationist C. Dudley Brown, an interior designer with a specialty in historic interiors, found the Latrobe stove pictured here in a house on the SE corner of 10th and East Capitol Streets. Although all the parts were present many were broken, but Dudley managed to restore it to its present impeccable condition. (It is now residing at the Brass Knob, awaiting a new owner.)

Latrobe stoves, invented by John H. B. Latrobe of Baltimore in 1845, became widely popular during the late 1800s. They were more efficient than the earlier Franklin stoves and could burn up to 14 hours on a single load of hard coal. In addition, they took up less space in a room and were more attractive, as the smoke pipe went behind the stove to connect to the chimney rather than extending above the mantel to connect with the chimney.

Coal was poured into a “magazine” (the open door at the top of the stove shown) above a brick-lined firepot and fed down as the coal beneath burned to ash. The draft could be controlled by regulators in the base, and a damper in the smoke pipe (not shown) also helped to control the burn rate. With doors fitted with a translucent sheet of mica (also popularly called isinglass), a rosy glow could be seen when the coals were red. Many stoves, such as this one, were embellished cast iron

with some nickel-plate parts, so they were attractive objects in the parlor. In fact, “parlor stove” became one of its alternative names.

A number of the oral histories collected for the Ruth Ann Overbeck Oral History Project (www.capitolhillhistory.org) mention Latrobe stoves, including the interview given in 2003 by Mary Jerrell, who lived at 808 East Capitol Street from the time her family moved there when she was five years old until she sold the house in 1997. Andrea Kerr was the interviewer.

JERRELL: “...[W]e had gaslight in the alley; electric lights on the street, but a gaslight in the alley. Every evening, about dusk, this little man would come along and he had this stick with some kind of gadget on it that he would light the light and I assume that at daybreak he must have come back again. I never was up at that time so I don’t know, but that was a big treat watching him do that.

... And [our house] had Latrobe heat, not a fireplace ...”

KERR: “Describe the Latrobe heat for me.

JERRELL: “Well, it wasn’t exactly a stove. But it’s sort of shaped ... like half of a stove, I guess,

fitting into the fireplace and on the floor. You used coal, I think, for it. And on the floors above there was a little place, something like this thing in the wall [motions], so that the heat went up the chimney and heated the bedrooms above. We didn’t have electricity when we moved in.”

KERR: “Did you have gas lamps?”

JERRELL: “We had gas. ... In fact my father didn’t have too much confidence in electricity. We had one lamp that was a ceiling light that was gas and electric both. I left that in the house [in 1997, when she sold the house].” ★



PHOTO COURTESY NORMAN METZGER

Latrobe stove.

Time Capsule: Rapid Transit, Circa 1964

From the CHRS newsletter dated April 1964, an early discussion of a rapid transit system:

“A rapid transit system of the future with equipment now available was described at the March 9 meeting by John R. Immer, president of Work Saving International, a Washington-based management consulting firm. Mr. Immer, an internationally known expert on industrial management and transportation, is active in various Washington citizens’ organizations.



PHOTO COURTESY WWW.SHORPY.COM

1917 photo of train yard in Southwest DC. Capitol and Library of Congress domes in the background.

“The Immer plan calls for a 38.3 mile monorail-subway transit system extending through the District into Virginia and Maryland suburban areas and connecting with National Airport. The 3.9 miles of subway would run under E Street, NW from Union Station to Twenty-third Street and under Fifteenth Street from L Street, NW to C Street SW. Estimated cost is \$359.5 million, compared with \$400.6 for the revised National Capitol Transportation Agency plan. Estimated construction time is 3 years, compared with 5 years for the NCTA plan.

“The overhead monorail, which is supported on pylons 3 feet in diameter, erected 100-150 feet apart in the center of the street, would come into the Capitol Hill area along C Street SE to Eleventh Street and thence across the Anacostia River. Plans call for a big station near the Cannon House Office Building, with access by escalator.

“The monorail system was described as safe, quiet, smooth-riding, operable in all kinds of weather, and entirely practical. The plan utilizes much of the comprehensive basic data of the original NCTA study. The New York World’s Fair monorail will facilitate acceptance of the system in Washington, Mr. Immer stated.

“After an extended question-and-answer period members approved a motion that the Society request NCTA (1) to consider the Immer monorail-subway plan; (2) to weigh the relative advantages of the C Street, SE route and an Independence-Pennsylvania Avenue route; and (3) to consider a subway through residential Capitol Hill.”

Square 1060, continued from page 4

said earlier, a 1912 report found only 15 alley home owners in the entire city.

On the 1928 Sanborn map, there are seven contiguous accessory buildings at the northwest corner of King’s Court and 14½ Street. These appear to be the 29 King’s Court artists’ building (formerly a paper box factory). The 1956 Sanborn map shows the site as a “Paper box factory.” The 1960 and 1965 City Directory shows Better Boxes Co. as Rear 230 14th Street, SE; that same listing is in the C&P Yellow Pages for 1970 and 1975 and in the Haines Directory for 1980–1982. However, there is no listing for Better Boxes Co.

in 1989–1990 Haines. We know that the paper box factory manufactured pizza boxes and we know that neighbors remember touring the factory as part of a school field trip.

King’s Court/14½ Street— Demographic Note

The Census for 1900 and 1910 shows that all residents were black, which was typically the case of alley residents. Between 1900 and until sometime between 1902 and 1912, George White, a black man, owned 214 14½ Street, SE. The 1900 Census shows that he was 50 years old, a laborer, and lived there with his wife Rebecca and five sons. Rebecca White

worked as a laundress. In 1900, he had repairs done to his house. He was only one of two alley owner-occupants found in Hill East in the early twentieth century; this was a notable accomplishment for a black man during the Jim Crow era. He died sometime between 1902 and 1912 (George appeared in the City Directory in 1902 and is replaced by Rebecca in 1912, which gives us our dateline). However, the real property tax assessments continued to show George White as the owner until at least 1930. As of 1920, Rebecca White is listed as living at 214 14½ Street, SE. In 1930, Mrs. Pauline Berry was living at 214 King’s Alley. ★



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

Mark Your Calendar!

NOVEMBER

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: "The Captain Who Burned His Ships." Naval Lodge Hall, 330 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE.
Free but reservation required:
OverbeckLecture@CapitolHillHistory.org

10 Thursday, 7:30 pm
CHRS Zoning Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor.
Details: Gary Peterson, 547-7979.

Saturdays, April 16–November 19
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

14 Monday, 7:00–9:00 pm
CHRS workshop, "How to Be Heard During Federal Project Reviews," with Georgetown Law Professor Peter Byrne and CHRS 2nd Vice President Shauna Holmes. Hill Center, 921 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE; free and open to the public. Details: Shauna Holmes, 546-5211.

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

16 Wednesday, 6:30–7:15 pm
CHRS Preservation Cafe, "Demonstration of Faux Finishing" featuring DC architect Carol Beach. Ebenezers Coffeehouse, 2nd & F Streets, NE, downstairs; free, accessible, no reservations needed. Details: Shauna Holmes, 546-5211.

29 Tuesday, 7:00 pm
Second Annual CHRS Fun Fall Auction. Hill Center (Old Naval Hospital), 921 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE.

DECEMBER

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, 547-7979.

9 Friday, 6:30–9:00 pm
Membership forum on CSX Virginia Avenue Tunnel project. Hill Center, 921 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE.
Details: CapHRS@aol.com.

20 Tuesday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor. Details: Beth Purcell, 622-4303.