60th Annual House and Garden Tour: Mansions—Victorian and Modern

by Beth Purcell

Our 60th House and Garden Tour centers on East Capitol Street and offers something for everyone: ten fabulous houses with novel details, fine furnishings and art collections, and interesting gardens. All the tour stops are within walking distance from freshly renovated St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, 301 A Street, SE, where refreshments will be served on Sunday, May 14.

Everyone wants to see East Capitol Street mansions, and this year’s tour offers outstanding 19th and 20th century examples. 705 and 707 East Capitol Street, SE, built in 1876–1877, are two in a row of identical two-story, three-bay, flat-front, brick Italianate houses with raised English basements, cast-iron front steps, decorative double doors with bolection molding, segmental arched-windows with brick-hooded crowns, and wide-overhanging eaves with bracketed cornice.

Both houses are spectacular, still similar in many ways, yet adapted by a succession of owners to suit individual needs and preferences. At 705, the master bedroom stretches across the front of the house. The kitchen is in the light-filled English basement, where the old hearth holds the oven; there are marble counters, a Shaws fireclay apron sink, a large woodblock island, and early 1900s holophane shades. The bathrooms are a mix of modern and historic. On the third-floor set back addition, visitors can enjoy views of the Library of Congress and the Capitol.

500 East Capitol Street, NE.

705 and 707 East Capitol Street, SE.

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The March Preservation Café featured local architectural conservator and Capitol Hill resident, Justine P. Bello, speaking on the topic of how to distinguish vintage from modern materials in a Capitol Hill row house.

Bello introduced several “lenses” through which the homeowner can look at his or her home to help interpret the built fabric. This process should always begin by looking at the greater context of a particular row of homes, or even an entire block: are there obvious patterns that help you understand how your house fits into the greater whole? Are there obvious “scars” that tell of features that might have been lost? Does a unique element stick out amongst its neighbors? This is the sort of framework in which we can start to evaluate the clues in plain sight about the chronology of our property.

She proceeded to present a variety of specific case studies with useful tips towards interpreting different aspects of Capitol Hill homes. Although there are exceptions to everything, the following examples are based on general trends.

- Does that transom window over your door have functional hardware like hinges and a latch? Has the sash been painted over at least a dozen times, leaving the molding edges looking soft and indistinct? Chances are it’s original. If the transom lacks functional hardware, and the lines of the sash appear crisp with few coats of paint, it’s more likely to be a replacement.

- Is your house wood? It would have always been painted—although maybe not the color it is today! Is your house brick? Most likely it would not have been originally painted; more likely, this was an addition in the second half of the 20th century.

- Exposed brick walls are a phenomenon of the late 20th century. The wall would have originally been covered by a multi-coat system of plaster.

Bello couched her discussion in the question: why does it matter? She strongly cautions against equating “old” with “good” and “new” with “bad.” Rather, she encourages each homeowner to get to know his or her home for a variety of reasons. Doing so can help you make informed decisions, understand regulatory requirements (where applicable), and in general, foster a deeper appreciation for what makes each property so special.

Upcoming Preservation Cafés

**Gary Barnhart**, owner of GL Barnhart Construction, will present “Elements of Capitol Hill Historic and Modern Masonry” on April 19, 2017, at the Northeast Neighborhood Library, 330 7th Street, NE. Barnhart will discuss various types of older and newer masonry construction systems found throughout Capitol Hill homes and buildings.

**Seth Baum** of Historical Arts and Casting, Inc., will discuss the firm’s recent restoration and reconstruction work of the cast-iron dome of the Capitol Building. Baum’s presentation will be on May 17, 2017, at the Northeast Neighborhood Library.
Zoning Committee Report

By Gary Peterson

During a meeting held on March 9, 2017, the committee considered the following cases:

BZA #19438, 1415 Potomac Avenue, SE. This routine case involves a request to make a two-story addition that requires a special exception to increase the lot occupancy from 53% to 68%. The Committee voted to support the application.

BZA #19460, 619 Elliot Street, SE. This case involves the construction of a third floor with a roof deck. The applicant needs a special exception for a lot occupancy increase from 59% to 64%. The Committee opposed this application for two reasons: in the front of the house, the third floor addition is set immediately behind the existing cornice line (there should be a 1 to 1 setback) and, in the rear, the third floor is cantilevered over the dogleg so that it keeps a dogleg with a roof (the dogleg must not have the third floor covering it). The Committee voted to oppose the application.

BZA #19461, 1126 Constitution Avenue, NE. The applicant proposes to build a two-story garage and needs special exceptions for lot occupancy and alley setback. The lot occupancy will go from 52% to 70%. The garage must be at least 12 feet from the centerline of an alley and the proposal is for a 7.5 foot setback. The alley is only 15 feet wide and the request is consistent with other such structures. The Committee voted to support the application.

BZA #19462, 316 G Street, NE. The applicant wants to add a third floor to the existing house and to add a small three-story addition to the back of the house. A special exception is needed to go from 60% lot occupancy to 70%. The applicant will fill in a dogleg but add a lightwell. The addition is setback 10 feet from the front of the house. The Committee objects to enclosing the dogleg.

BZA #19463, 420 12th Street, SE. The District of Columbia requests special exception relief from the rooftop mechanical screening requirement for the modernization and addition to Watkins Elementary School. One of the mechanical areas is fully screened on the north and south and is partially screened by walls of the building on the other sides. The noisy HVAC system is fully screened at another location of the building. The Committee voted to approve the application because the mechanical will not be visible from the street and the equipment at this location will not be noisy.

BZA #19480, 202 9th Street, SE. The applicant needs lot occupancy and alley centerline relief to build a two-story carriage house. The lot occupancy will increase from 46% to 69%. The alley is 20 feet wide and the building will be set on the property line. As in the case above, the building should be setback 12 feet and a special exception is needed for a 10 foot setback. The Committee approved the application because the carriage house is consistent with other property in the alley.

BZA #19481, 1241 Independence Avenue, SE. The applicant needs to repair and replace a shed, attached to the rear of the house, containing mechanical equipment. The house has no basement. Because the applicant is going to reconstruct a pergola also attached to the rear of the house, the lot occupancy will decrease from the existing 71% but
The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB, or the Board) considered the following cases on March 30, 2017. HPRB is responsible for determining if proposed changes to a building are consistent with the DC Preservation Act. A “concept review” is a preliminary determination of a building owner’s plan to alter the building, and if the concept is approved, the owner will return to the HPRB for a final review. In these reports, “staff” refers to the staff of the Historic Preservation Office (HPO), which serves as the staff of the HPRB.

1335 Massachusetts Avenue SE, HPA 17-041, concept/roof and rear additions. The building is one of a row of two-story contributing brick buildings (1315-1335 Massachusetts Avenue) constructed in 1906 by J.W. Trumbull for owner Wright & Hopkins, and designed by William L. Webster.

The project is a second story rear addition above a one-story structure and a third-story addition, which would be the first third story structure on this block. A preliminary flag test showed that the addition would not be visible from public space across the street, but failed to resolve whether the addition would be visible from oblique angles.

The dogleg would be retained, a positive feature of the project, preserving a key feature of the interior landscape of this row of houses, with doglegs and open space between the houses and buildings fronting on the alley or the alley itself. However, we believed that the rear addition, as shown on the applicant’s plans, would overwhelm and substantially disrupt this pattern of open space. As it turns out, viewing the entire square on Google Earth shows that there are already multiple structures in the interior of the square and the applicant’s planned addition would not significantly change the square’s open space.

The roof decks would be at the rear and would not be visible from Massachusetts Avenue but would be visible from public space in the alley. We believed that the project was not compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District.

The Board ordered the applicant to work with staff to ensure that the addition would not be visible from oblique angles, and if it were, to shift the addition back, and that the roof deck was overlarge and should be pulled back in the rear to align with the dogleg. Vote: 6:0.

407A 4th Street SE, HPA 17-176, concept/roof and rear additions. This rowhouse is two bays wide, and two stories tall, and is a contributing building in a block that has a variety of buildings, setbacks, and heights. The applicant proposes to add a roof top deck and rear additions. HPRB requires that additions to historic buildings must not be visible from public space.

The revised plans showed a lowered addition, and the revised sightline study showed the correct reference point, and a preliminary flag test indicated that the addition should not be visible from across 4th Street. However, the proposed roof deck would be very close to the front wall, and we urged that it be pulled back to minimize view of roof deck appurtenances. We also agreed with the staff’s recommendation that the addition not extend past 329 D Street.

Concerning the windows on the rear elevation, windows on Capitol Hill houses generally have a hierarchy: the largest windows are on the first story, and windows become progressively smaller on the second and third story. In contrast, these plans show the largest windows on the third story, creating a top-heavy effect. Having three types of windows (double-hung, casement) added to the discordant effect. The materials on the rear elevation should also be specified.

We believed that if the second floor roof deck was overlarge and should be pulled back and that the applicant work with staff on the rear windows (especially hierarchy). Concerned about the visibility of the windows in the third story addition at night, the Board directed that a skylight replace an east-facing window.

316 G Street NE, HPA 17-227, concept/roof and rear additions. This Classical Revival rowhouse, in the “Swampoodle” extension to the Capitol Hill Historic District, is one of a pristine row of two-story houses. The project proposes a third story rear addition. Although the sight line study indicates that the addition would not be visible from certain angles on G Street, it would be visible from oblique angles on G Street.

This project also proposes to fill a dogleg, destroying an intact mirror-image pair of doglegs, character-defining features in the historic district. All 14 doglegs on this block are intact. We believed that it is possible to preserve the dogleg while allowing a viable addition, and that the project with its visible addition...
on a pristine block of two-story houses and loss of the dogleg was not compatible with the historic district. The Board did not reach a resolution and directed the applicant to study the concerns expressed on the third story addition and dogleg and submit revised plans. Vote: 6:0.

411 8th Street SE, HPA 17-250, concept/alter primary elevation. The two-story commercial building at 411 8th Street, SE, is a non-contributing resource built sometime after 1976, after the previous building had been condemned and razed. The developer wishes to increase storefront visibility by featuring window walls on the first and second floor. The drawings show Roman brick laid in stretchers and articulated by several rows of soldier courses in the belt course and cornice. Retail signage will be steel channel letters internally illuminated and positioned just above the projecting glass bay window wall.

Staff was concerned that the datum line should be coordinated with the adjacent buildings, that the size of the lettering should be 12” not 18” tall, and that the size of the second story windows should be proportional with a building of the same height. The Board voted to accept the staff report, including revising the second story windows, and requiring the applicant to check the Barracks Row Main Street guidelines. Vote 6:0.

The following cases, in which CHRS participated, were on the consent calendar:

- 1126 Constitution Ave NE, HPA 17-228, concept/two-story garage
- 742 9th Street, SE, HPA 17-132, permit/one-story garage
- 523 8th Street SE, HPA 17-246, concept/roof and rear additions.

Interested in learning more about historic district designation?
Contact CHRS at caphrs@aol.com.
707 has the original floor plan, much of the original woodwork including pocket doors, and a spectacular modern kitchen and rear addition leading to the garden.

Two 20th century houses present a modern facet of East Capitol Street. 620 East Capitol Street, NE, built in 1990, was remodeled by award-winning architect Robert M. Guerney in an industrial modern style. A Palladian window lights the living room, enhanced by Guerney’s custom-built maple cabinets surrounding a granite fireplace on the west. Cabinets on the opposite wall have etched-glass fronts featuring a stylized motif repeated throughout the home. The maple flooring further unifies and defines the space. Many of the lighting fixtures in the home were specified by Guerney as well. The dining room features a glass and steel table Guerney built into a canted wall, an elegant solution for dining in a narrow space.

500 East Capitol Street, NE, was built in 1995 and designed by local architect Eric Colbert. The interior combines vintage doors and fixtures with reproduction moldings and decorative plasterwork, and a stunning three-story staircase. The octagonal dining room has Thomas Moser sideboards and an antique grandfather clock. Visitors should not miss the amazing backsplash in the deluxe kitchen, and remember to exit to see the dramatic garden designed by Gary Hallewell.

Other private residences on the tour include 506 A Street, SE; 120 5th Street, SE; 122 5th Street, SE; 122 3rd Street, SE; 19 2nd Street, NE; and 330 A Street, NE.

There is something special about each property. One house reflects the owners’ love of Asian culture with shoji screens throughout. Another is a testament to a lifetime of literature and patronage of the arts. A home that looks modest from the exterior seems to expand, as if by magic, upon entering, with an en-suite bathroom for each bedroom. Others have clever features like a double-sided fireplace, a circular staircase, or an eclectic mix of heirlooms and found objects.

Tour attendees can visit two unique buildings that many never see: Florida House and Naval Lodge No. 4. Florida House (One 2nd Street, NE) belongs to the people of Florida, and hosts many visitors, offering a happy stopover in their exploration of Washington. The building was constructed as a single-family residence in 1891 and was altered several times, becoming a rooming house, and later, apartments. Visitors enter from 2nd Street into airy rooms featuring works by prominent Florida artists, furnished with antiques (an sideboard, tall case George III clock from the early 19th century, and a grand pier mirror).

The Naval Lodge, 330 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, built in 1895, is the oldest continually-operating Mason lodge in the District. The lodge room on the top floor, where the ceilings are 27 feet high, was painted by the artist H.B. Leary. Leary’s colorful images include representations of Egyptian mythology like the sun god Ra and his companions in the

Continued on page 11
A message from the President:

**We Need You!**

The House and Garden Tour is arguably the most important program the Society presents. It is our signature event and a primary source of funding for our many other activities.

The House Tour Committee members have done their part by recruiting a wide variety of “tour worthy” properties. Now it’s up to the rest of us to properly staff the event.

**Docents are an essential component of the Tour.** They help check people in at each house, keep the traffic flowing, and add a layer of protection for the homeowners. So I’m hoping that many of you will be willing and able to assist. As important as the task is, it’s very pleasant to sit in a lovely home and greet visitors—many of whom will be old friends you haven’t seen in ages. It’s also a grand opportunity to make new friends. And you and your fellow docents will be invited to the President’s Party after the event as a “thank you.”

We’ll be recruiting up to the day of the Tour to ensure we have complete coverage and to fill in any last-minute cancellations, so it’s never too late to offer to help.

There are three shifts: one on Saturday and two on Sunday. The Saturday shift runs from 4–7 pm; on Sunday, the shifts run from 12–2:30 pm and 2:30–5 pm. Volunteers should arrive at least 15 minutes early in order to become familiarized with the house.

Please contact me at elizabeth_knits@yahoo.com or (202) 329-7864 to sign up—we’ll be grateful to have you!
Here are some ideas for finding appropriate replacement doors for nineteenth century Capitol Hill houses.

Guidance
The CHRS publication, Judith M. Capen, AIA, “Entrance—When a door is more than a door,” shows appropriate and inappropriate doors in the historic district: www.chrs.org > History and Preservation > CHRS Historic District.

Sources for Replacement Doors

2) Simpson Doors: https://goo.gl/7PPJ8o

3) Siewers.com. 1901 Ellen Road, Richmond, VA. (804) 358-2103.


Notes on Door Replacement
One of the issues that homeowners must address is not just the style of the door, but the size of the door. If they are lucky enough to have a standard size door (6’ 8” high), there are many manufacturers and suppliers of doors that should have something architecturally appropriate in ½ or ¼ glass styles. What owners should avoid is reducing the width and height in order to accommodate a standard size door.

A further complication is that many of our houses have door units that include the transom—the frame of the door is often a wide piece of wood that has some important architectural elements and is integral with the transom. Since many doors are sold pre-hung with all the weather stripping and sill included, it takes some careful measuring and selective removal of the existing frame to get a door that fits properly and looks appropriate. ✯
The Third Annual Dick Wolf Memorial Lecture was held on March 24 at the Hill Center to a standing room only crowd. Kelsey Robertson is the winner of the 2017 Dick Wolf Memorial Lecture competition. Her lecture, titled: “Historic Districts & Climate Change: Examining the Vulnerability of Washington DC’s Historic Districts to Sea Level Rise,” is based on her Master’s thesis.

Robertson explores the vulnerability of historic districts to climate change and sea level rise and identifies adaptation planning mechanisms to increase climatic resilience without significantly diminishing the integrity of the built and cultural environment of these historic districts. The research separately identified the projected 2080 flood plain and the projected 2080 sea level rise and then showed the DC historic districts that would be affected and explained that the now-underway DC planning process needs to include a climate adaptive framework.

Following her lecture, a panel of three special guests discussed the major points of her lecture: Tommy Wells, Director of the Department of Energy and Environment; Tanya Stern, Deputy Director, Planning, Engagement and Design, DC Office of Planning; and Gretchen Pfaehler, Architectural Historian, Member and former Chair of the Historic Preservation Review Board.

The champagne reception that followed the program allowed attendees to discuss the program with Robertson and the panelists. Slides from the presentation and additional photos from the event are posted online at www.chrs.org/2017-dick-wolf-lecture-photos. ♠
60th Annual
HOUSE & GARDEN TOUR
MAY 13 & 14, 2017 MOTHER’S DAY WEEKEND

INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS AND TICKET ORDER FORM

Tax-Deductible Contributions
Benefactors, Patrons, and Sponsors will be listed in the CHRS News.

☐ Benefactor ($1,000, 8 complimentary tickets, $760 deductible)
☐ Patron ($500, 4 complimentary tickets, $380 deductible)
☐ Sponsor ($250, 2 complimentary tickets, $190 deductible)
☐ Contributor ($100, completely deductible)
☐ Funder ($50, completely deductible)

My/our name(s) should be listed as follows:
__________________________________________________________________
E-mail address:____________________________________________________

Member Tour Tickets

☐ Member tickets @ $30 each (limit 2 per household through April 23)
☐ Additional tickets @ $35 each ($40 each on Tour weekend)

Payment Information
Sum of contribution and tickets. Your cancelled check or credit card statement will be your receipt.

☐ Enclosed is my check for $ ____________ payable to CHRS, Inc.
☐ Please bill my credit card $ ____________ ☐ MC ☐ Visa ☐ AMEX

Name on card: _____________________________________________________
Card #: ____________ ____________ ____________ ____________
3 or 4-digit CVV: ____________ Expiration Date: ____________ ____________ ____________

Signature: _________________________________________________________

Ticket Delivery Method
☐ Mail tickets at no additional charge (must be received by May 4) to:
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

☐ Hold tickets for pickup at Hill Center, 901 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE

Mail or scan/e-mail this form with full payment by May 11.
form of sun disks, hawks, serpents representing life and death, the sun god’s all-seeing eye, and Ra’s sacred boat, used to make his diurnal journey through the heavens; lotuses symbolizing birth or inexhaustible life; feathers representing truth, and the ceiling’s blue dome studded with five-point stars representing the starry heavens. Long rooted in the Capitol Hill community, the lodge hosts many community functions. It’s called the “Naval Lodge” because many of its early members in 1895 were craftspeople or workers at the Navy.

As an add-on to the houses open for the tour, there will be guided outdoor mini-tours of the alley
dwellings on Terrace Court, NE (2nd/3rd/East Capitol/A Streets, NE). These eight houses, built in 1889 as rental properties, have a fascinating history, and survive today because owners in the late 1940s renovated them, and then organized to save their homes from demolition as “slum housing.” This activity is free to everyone. Meet on the sidewalk between 217 and 219 A Street, NE. Guided tours occur on May 13 at 4:30 pm & 6 pm and on May 14 at 12:30 pm & 2:30 pm.

Mark your calendar for Saturday, May 13, 4–7pm and Sunday, May 14, 12–5pm. Order your tickets today! ★

Q&A on Home Maintenance and Repair

CHRS encourages members and nonmembers to email questions about historic district guidelines. We try to answer questions as best we can. If you have a question, please email caphrs@aol.com.

Where to put new “heavy-up” electric meters?

Q. An addition to our house will require a “heavy-up” for our electrical service. As of now, the old 100 amp service meter is placed on the outside of the house and is not much of a distraction from the facade, but the new meter box has a much larger footprint, and there is no good place to hide the meter on the exterior of the building.

I have read in the HPRB Design Guidelines for Utility Meters that we should have the option of having Pepco place the meter inside the building. See www.planning.dc.gov/page/historic-preservation-review-board > Design Guidelines > Guidelines by Topic > Utility Meters. Our electrician says that they cannot recall a single instance in which Pepco has allowed a homeowner to do so. Do you have any advice for us?

A. We checked on this question and learned that DCRA routinely approves installing electric meters inside buildings, and that meters are regularly installed inside.

Zoning Briefs, continued from page 3

will exceed 60%, and thus the need for a special exception. The existing pergola has rafters that are less than 24 inches apart and counts against lot occupancy. The new pergola will have rafters greater than 24 inches apart. The Committee approved this request because there is little change from the existing conditions. ★
APRIL

13 Thursday, 7:30 pm
CHRS Zoning Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Gary Peterson (202) 547-7969.

18 Tuesday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor board room. Details: Elizabeth Nelson (202) 543-0425, info@chrs.org.

19 Wednesday, 6:30 pm

MAY

1 Monday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Historic Preservation Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Beth Purcell (202) 544-0178.

11 Thursday, 7:30 pm
CHRS Zoning Committee, Kirby House, 420 10th Street, SE, first floor. Details: Gary Peterson (202) 547-7969.

13 Saturday, 4–7 pm
14 Sunday, 12–5 pm
CHRS House & Garden Tour. Details: Carl Spier, (202) 543-0425, www.chrs.org or email caphrs@aol.com.

16 Tuesday, 6:30 pm
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street, SE, second floor board room. Details: Elizabeth Nelson, (202) 543-0425, info@chrs.org.

17 Wednesday, 6:30 pm
Historic Preservation Café, Northeast Neighborhood Library, 330 7th Street, NE. Seth Baum of Historical Arts and Casting, Inc. will discuss the firm’s recent restoration and reconstruction work on the cast-iron dome of the Capitol Building. Details: CHRS Office, (202) 543-0425.

60th Annual Capitol Hill House and Garden Tour
Mother’s Day Weekend · May 13–14, 2017
Information and tickets at: (202) 543-0425 or www.chrs.org

If you received a complimentary copy of this newsletter, please consider joining CHRS!
www.chrs.org