



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

# NEWS

www.chrs.org

November 2018

## Creating Capitol Hill: Place, Proprietors, and People at September Community Forum

By Susan Burgerman

Pamela Scott is an architectural historian who has lectured on and written about Washington’s architectural, landscape, and planning histories for over fifty years. She contributed the section “Capitol Neighbors” to *Creating Capitol Hill: Place, Proprietors, and People*, recently published by the United States Capitol Historical Society. Scott was joined for her presentation by Don Alexander Hawkins, who produced the book’s beautiful and informative maps of early Washington. Hawkins is an architect with a special interest in how mapping contributes to the overall understanding of city plans, in particular L’Enfant’s plan of Washington.

Hawkins opened the presentation by explaining how agricultural development drove expansion in Virginia and Maryland. First, tobacco cultivation enabled the struggling settlement at Jamestown (founded in 1607) to survive. Hawkins noted that it took nearly one hundred and fifty years for tobacco cultivation to travel north to the current Washington metro area. With the establishment of Alexandria in 1749 and Georgetown in 1751, tobacco farmers were able to ship their crop from local ports, and production flourished on both

sides of the Potomac River. As the population of settlers grew, they discovered that the undeveloped, arable land in Virginia’s piedmont was well suited to growing wheat, which led to expanded settlement inland from the Potomac.

Pamela Scott picked up the story from there. Her presentation focused on the builder/architects who first developed public and private buildings in Capitol Hill, beginning with George Blagden, an English builder who immigrated in 1794. Within a year, Blagden was working as master mason on the President’s House (i.e., the White House). George Washington, who had just ended his presidency, contracted Blagden in 1798 to build a house which he himself had designed, on a lot between North Capitol and New Jersey Avenue.

The house was designed as a convertible duplex, with a dividing wall that could be removed to create a single dwelling. Washington intended to rent the building as a hotel or boardinghouse for members of Congress who would arrive in 1800 to a new city with very few places to live. However, Washington had a difficult time finding a tenant. Ultimately, the



IMAGE COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON

Architectural historian Pamela Scott at the September Community Forum.

### Also in this issue

#### ARTICLES

CHRS House Expo .....	2
Cell Phone Towers .....	5
National Solar Tour.....	7

#### COLUMNS

Zoning Report .....	3
Historic Preservation Briefs .....	4
Thank You CHRS Supporters .....	6

#### LOOKING AHEAD

Ward 6 Matters: Public Space .....	5
November Preservation Café .....	7
Mark Your Calendar.....	8

Continued on page 6

# 2018 CHRS House Expo a Success!

On October 21, vendors showcased their services to Expo attendees in the North Hall of Eastern Market. The Expo welcomed 25 vendors representing a variety of disciplines from house

maintenance to historians, artists, and even government agencies. Thank you to all who exhibited and attended!

We thank the Expo sponsors the *Hill Rag* and Coldwell Banker. ★

IMAGES COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON



## 2018 CHRS Home Expo Exhibitors

**Abay Iron Works**, Iron works  
abayironworks.com

**Area Access**  
Home elevators, stair lifts  
areaaccess.com

**Cap Hill Garden Club**, Gardening  
capitolhillgardenclub.org

**CHRS**, Preservation/Restoration  
CHRS.org

**Capitol Hill Village**,  
Retirement community  
capitolhillvillage.org

**Coldwell Banker**, Realtor  
chuckburger.com

**Community Forklift**  
Recycled building supplies  
communityforklift.org

**DC Access**, Internet & TV  
dcaccess.net

**DC Fire/ EMS**, Fire safety  
fems.dc.gov

**DCRA**, Consumer Regulatory  
dcra.dc.gov

**DC Sustainable Energy Utility**  
Appliance Rebates  
dcseu.com/for-my-home/  
appliance-rebates

**DC Water (WASA)**  
Lead testing, meters  
dcwater.com

**DOEE**, Energy & Environment  
doee.dc.gov

**GL Barnhart Construction**  
Brickwork & Tool Zoo  
glbarnhart.com

**Mahoney Painting**, Painting  
mahoneypainting.com

**Mozer Works, Inc.**  
Window restoration  
windowrestoration.us

**N&M House Detectives**  
House Histories  
nmhousedetectives.com

**Pup Art**, Animal art  
pupartbyaw@gmail.com

**Renewal by Andersen**, Windows  
renewalbyandersen.com

**Solar Energy World**, Solar panels  
solarenergyworld.com

**State Farm**, Insurance  
statefarm.com

**Teass/Warren Architects**, Architects  
teass-warren.com

**TrustEd Champions**  
Senior assistance  
www.TrustEdChampions.com

**Wagner Roofing**, Roofing  
wagnerroofing.com

**Wilcox Electric**, Electrician  
wilcox-electric.com

# Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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\* Chair is an appointed Board Member

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## OFFICE MANAGER

Jill Uvena Cullinane

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

## ABOUT CHRS

Capitol Hill is a special place. We promote, preserve, and enhance the character of our historic neighborhoods.

Since its founding in 1955, CHRS has worked continuously to make Capitol Hill the desirable location it has now become. Due to CHRS's efforts, Capitol Hill won designation as a historic district in 1976. Today, that legacy of standing up for the community continues with our work in planning, zoning, historic preservation, and public safety.

CHRS is a volunteer organization, made up of Hill residents who love their historic neighborhoods and want to ensure that the unique character of the Hill is around for future generations. Come join us!

To learn more or join, please visit:  
www.CHRS.org

# Zoning Report

By Gary Peterson

During a meeting held on October 8, 2018, the CHRS Zoning Committee considered the following cases:

**BZA 19847**, 329 16th Street SE. The applicant needs a special exception to build a rear addition that extends 10 feet beyond the rear wall of an adjoining property. In this case the addition will extend 16 feet, two inches beyond the rear wall of the property to the south, 331 16th Street SE. As part of the addition, the applicant will fill in a rear dogleg. The Committee found that the extremely large addition overwhelms the one neighbor and recommends that the special exception should be denied. The applicant may want to consider a smaller addition and an accessory building with an apartment. Subsequent to the meeting the applicant advised that he is going to redo the plans and make the addition smaller. These revised plans will be considered at the November 8 meeting.

**BZA 19864**, 526-528 8th Street SE. The applicant is proposing to build a three story commercial building on a vacant parking lot. He needs a special exception to provide 2

parking spaces instead of 4 and a variance to not provide for a loading berth. The Committee agreed with the applicant that providing more than two parking spaces was impractical. The lot contains 4,600+ square feet and is too small to provide a loading berth. The alley behind the lot is narrow and already congested. Residents with garages on the alley are opposed to more trucks using the alley. DDOT wants to remove the curb cut for the parking lot and has agreed to expand the existing loading zone that is partially in front of the lot. The Committee voted to support the application.

**BZA 19867**, 816 Potomac Avenue SE. The applicant proposes to construct a four story addition to the west side of an existing building. He needs a special exception to provide a closed court (light well) that is smaller than is required by the code (6 ft. wide instead of 9 ft.). The purpose of the closed court is to provide light to interior rooms. The smaller closed court may impact the marketability of the units because of the lack of light but the Committee considered that to be the applicant's decision. The Committee voted to support the application. ★



IMAGES COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON

Festival goers visit the CHRS booth on Barracks Row Day, September 29, 2018.

# Historic Preservation Briefs

By Beth Purcell

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB or the Board) considered the following cases on September 27, 2018. 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.

**121 Tennessee Avenue NE, HPA 18-430,** concept/two-story addition at rear. This three-story brick dwelling was built in 1892 by owner and builder D. B. Gottwals (Square 1012, lot 20). He also built three surrounding rowhouses at 119, 123, and 125 Tennessee Avenue. Each house is three stories and currently each has a one- or two-story rear addition.

The applicant proposes to build a new two-story rear addition on an existing one-story rear addition, creating a three-story addition. This addition will front on the alley, retaining the dogleg but altering the line of the second and third floor

addition’s south wall which will be canted instead of perpendicular to the main house.

We believed that the key issue in this case is the alley-scape and how this three-story rear addition would adversely affect the alley-scape. See HPO, Additions to Historic Buildings, p. 4. “A new rear addition that can be seen from a public street or alley should be compatible with the design of the rear elevation of the existing building.”

The Board has made it clear that it values alley-scapes and HPO has dedicated a publication to alleys. Alleys “were introduced into the urban planning in the initial years of the city’s development, ultimately becoming an integral part of its cultural landscape (HPO, The DC Historic Alley Buildings Survey, 2).” HPRB has recognized the importance of alleys and other landscape features and values not only street-facing houses, but the entire ensemble of the built environment, including secondary buildings, landscapes and alleys.

The alley in this square reflects land use planning in the 19th

century; it was laid out in 1889 with multiple, relatively shallow rowhouse lots, and a 10-foot wide alley.<sup>1</sup> All structures on the rear of the lots are one- to two-stories tall, with the exception of one three-story structure around the corner at 108 13th Street NE (not reviewed

by HPRB). The narrow alley and low-rise alley-facing buildings creates an alley-scape with a very intimate feel. We believed that a three-story structure fronting on this narrow, intimate alley would overwhelm the alley-scape and also block the view of the alley.

Several neighbors in square 1012 objected to the project.

For the reasons stated above, we believed the project was not compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District. At the July 27, 2018 hearing, a majority of the Board found the three-story addition would be “overwhelming” in this narrow alley. They voted to approve a two-story addition (i.e., adding one story to the existing one-story addition). However, finding that there was insufficient time to consider the applicant’s presentation and the views of ANC 6A, the case was re-heard on September 27, and the Board approved the three-story project by a vote of three in favor, two opposed and one abstention.

**152 11th Street SE, HPA 18-601,** concept/addition at rear. This three-story contributing brick rowhouse, part of “Philadelphia Row,” (124–154 11th Street SE) is believed to have been constructed in 1865 by Stephen Flanagan.<sup>2</sup> It’s the second house from the intersection of 11th Street SE and Independence Avenue; both are major streets. No change is planned to the front elevation, and the dogleg will be retained.

The applicant plans to build a two-story ten-foot rear addition, clad in brick. The design and materials for the rear elevation are compatible. However, the addition would be partly visible from Independence Avenue and raises an issue under the Board’s Additions to Historic Buildings. In 146 13th Street



DC Office of Surveyor plat of square 1012 showing lots 3 through 22 and a 10-foot wide alley. DCOS 16/122 (29 Mar. 1889). Arrow shows rear of lot 20 (121 Tennessee Avenue NE).

*Continued on page 6*

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# Ward 6 Matters: Putting the “Public” in Public Space

By Chuck Burger

**B**e it the use of the curbside for parking or food trucks, pocket parks, increased density awarded as a result of a Planned Unit Development, the ubiquitous sidewalk cafes that dot our urban landscape or the provision of new roadways, the organization and administration of Public Space impacts the lives of District residents. “Public Space” is all horizontal space outside private property lines as well the air rights above the limit that property owners can develop as a matter of right.

On November 15 between 7 and 9 pm at the Hill Center, a public panel

will discuss the manner in which the District of Columbia both administers public space as well as the means in which it is transferred permanently or leased to the private realm. Is the current system of public space administration adequate? Should it be reformed? Should there be more citizen involvement analogous to what occurs in zoning matters? The *Hill Rag*, The Ward 6 Democrats and the Hill Center have selected a knowledgeable panel to discuss the current arrangements and brainstorm ideas for the future:

- Charles Allen, Ward 6 Councilmember
- Matthew Marcou, Associate Director for the Public Space Regulations Division
- Meredith Fascett, Chair, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6D
- Nancy Metzger, Former Historic Preservation Board Member

Questions for the panelists will be taken both by email prior to the event at [ward6matters@hillrag.com](mailto:ward6matters@hillrag.com) and in writing at the event itself. ★

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## Cell Towers on our Streets

By Monte Edwards

**T**he FCC has determined that it is essential to expand present cell capability and prepare of the next generation (5G) of cell technology. To accomplish this, the FCC has exercised federal preemption to prevent local jurisdictions from prohibiting the installation of the infrastructure to support this technology, but does allow local jurisdictions to establish design guidelines for such installations.

The DDOT Public Space Committee has taken responsibility for this issue and has already signed master license agreements with the four major cell carriers and is developing design guidelines. The current proposal is to place groups of up to four 31-foot high cell towers, spaced about 300 feet apart, along roadways and sidewalks and in alleys (what is known as “public space”).

Wireless carriers have stated at public meetings that they plan to install 2,500 to 2,700 units throughout

the city, raising major issues on clutter in all neighborhoods and historic districts, and damage to street trees that are inadequately addressed in the draft design guidelines. This involves more than just “public space” and the DC Council Committee on Transportation will be holding a Roundtable on this issue on November 19. The Roundtable needs to address issues beyond just “public space”, for example:

- The siting of small cells in non “public space” locations, under the control of DC, like Kingman Island.
- The siting of small cells in non “public space” areas not under the control of DC, like the Mall, Anacostia Park, and Rock Creek Park under NPS and the Arboretum under USDA.
- Who will establish design standards for federally owned property under the control of DC, such as the 180-acre RFK campus?

- Whether there will be separate design standards for the interiors of federal parks (like Lincoln and Stanton Parks) from the design standards for the DC-street perimeters of the parks?

These are the kind of issues that demonstrate that this is a bigger and more complex subject than what the Public Space Committee/DDOT is now inadequately addressing. The Roundtable needs to encompass more than just “public space” so that City can develop a transparent and deliberative approach to the issues. We urge CHRS members to contact Councilmember Mary Cheh, Chair of the DC Council Committee on Transportation, and her staff to express your concerns:

[mcheh@dccouncil.us](mailto:mcheh@dccouncil.us)  
[jwillingham@dccouncil.us](mailto:jwillingham@dccouncil.us)  
[nrentz@dccouncil.us](mailto:nrentz@dccouncil.us)

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## Community Forum, *continued from cover*

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house was burned to the ground by the British in 1814; the lot is now part of the Senate Park.

Thomas Law was another important figure in Scott's talk. Law was an English investor who arrived in 1795 from India, where he had amassed a fortune working for the East India Company. He quickly bought five hundred lots east of the Capitol and became a major real estate developer. He married George Washington's step-granddaughter, Elizabeth Parke Custis, which gave him special access to the President. After he left office, Washington remained concerned about having offices and residences ready when the government moved to the new Federal City. Public buildings were going up quickly because Congress had appropriated funds for them, but residential construction was stagnant.

Law took advantage of his relationship to George Washington to promote Capitol Hill at a time when

Washington was wavering between his friends who owned property near Georgetown, and who argued that the city should be oriented in that direction, and the developers like Law who, along with Pierre L'Enfant, wanted the government to be located on Capitol Hill and the city to be oriented eastward. Washington had already invested in some lots near the Capitol site, and Law sought to tip the balance by urging him to build a house on one of those properties. The result was the double house described above. Law himself built several boardinghouses that served as residences for government officials when Congress was in session.

Ms. Scott told several other interesting anecdotes during her talk, all of which can be found in the book, *Creating Capitol Hill: Place, Proprietors, and People*. Copies were available for sale at the event, and there was an author signing following the presentation. ★

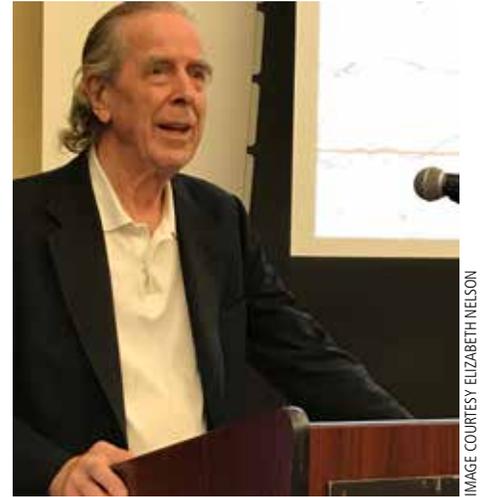


IMAGE COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON

Architect Don Alexander Hawkins.

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## HP Briefs, *continued from page 4*

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SE (HPA 15-127), a rowhouse very near this project, the Board found that a proposed third-story penthouse visible from Independence Avenue, was not compatible. In this case, the Board found that the rear addition would be largely obscured by other buildings and found the project to be compatible.

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

**411 New Jersey Avenue SE, HPA 16-248**, extension of concept approval/new three-story building (a previously-approved new building).

**624 C Street SE, HPA 18-511**, concept/one-story addition to one-story rear wing of two-story house.

**221 9th Street SE, HPA 18-610**, concept/second-story addition to garage, replace doors and windows.

**225 Pennsylvania Avenue SE ("Mayers Block"), HPA 18-613**, concept/rear addition. ★

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1 DC Office of Surveyor plat of Square 1012, creating lots 3 through 22 and 10-foot wide alley from original lot 1. Joseph B. Hill. DCOS 16/122 (29 Mar. 1889).

2 Source: DC IPS database.

**Interested in learning more about historic district designation?**

Contact CHRS at [caphrs@aol.com](mailto:caphrs@aol.com).

**Thank You,  
CHRS Supporters!**

CONTRIBUTOR

Michael Halebian & Co., Inc.

# 2018 National Solar Tour

By Joanna Kendig

For more than two decades, the American Solar Energy Society (ASES) has organized and delivered the largest grassroots solar event in the U.S., the National Solar Tour. The Tour takes place in cities and towns across the country. Doors open to 30,000 participants in 60+ locations nationwide. This year the tour took place on October 6 and 7 with over 700 buildings on the tour. For more details see [www.nationalsolartour.org](http://www.nationalsolartour.org).

This year ASES partnered with Solar United Neighbors (SUN) in organizing the 2018 National Solar Tour. A national organization representing the needs and interests of solar owners and supporters, District-based Solar United Neighbors helps people go solar, join together, and fight for their energy rights. SUN DC organizes bulk purchase of photovoltaic (PV) solar through solar buying cooperatives. See [solarunitedneighbors.org](http://solarunitedneighbors.org) for more information.

There were twenty houses on the tour in DMV area. One of these houses was the author's house in the Hill East neighborhood, outside the Capitol Hill Historic District. Our modestly-updated 1931 Wardman-style rowhouse uses so little power that the relatively small PV system generated 65% more electricity than we used in its first year. Our low-power consumption is the result of passive house solutions (shading, white roof, and natural ventilation in summer; sunlight and tight windows in winter), common sense insulation wherever possible (roof, attic, and renovated former back porch), and system-wide energy efficiency (energy Star appliances, fluorescent and LED lights). The house also has solar hot water for bathing and laundry, with secondary heating provided by our excess solar electricity.



IMAGE COURTESY JOANNA KENDIG

A view of the roof of the Capitol Hill home on the National Solar Tour.

We shared information about our solar systems and our energy efficiency measures with a number of visitors, mostly our neighbors on Capitol Hill. Power Point presentation photos and graphs helped explain the systems, their technical aspects, and financial benefits. Giving a tour of the house, we pointed out storm windows, improved venting skylight, ceiling fans and original radiators. And we pointed to our neighbor's PV array visible across the alley (but not from the street). There are more than ten such solar systems in our immediate neighborhood.

All the improvements we made are equally viable in more restrictive context of the historic district. Row houses are inherently more energy

efficient by having less exterior wall exposed to weather. Many have natural ventilation systems creating a chimney effect, increasing indoor comfort in summer months. PV panels can be mounted at low angles on the roofs and be visible only from the alley. Solar panel installations are encouraged by federal and local incentives. And in our residential neighborhood (in RF zones), existing installations and future permitted ones are protected from shading by new construction through zoning regulations.

Our Capitol Hill can retain its historic character and increase its contribution to renewable energy generation. An old house with 21st century energy sensibility is not a contradiction. ★

## Preservation Café: Window Restoration

Neil Mozer, owner of Mozer Works, Inc., will share his passion and expertise for old windows on Wednesday, November 14, 2018. Mr. Mozer will explain why old windows are important and just what it takes to do a professional restoration.

Preservation Cafés are free; all are welcome to attend. Northeast Library, downstairs meeting room (wheelchair accessible), 6:30 pm.



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

Capitol Hill Restoration Society  
420 10th Street SE  
Washington, DC 20003

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## Mark Your Calendar!

### NOVEMBER

**8** Thursday, 7:30 pm  
CHRS Zoning Committee. Kirby House,  
420 10th Street SE, first floor. Details:  
info@chrs.org.

**14** Wednesday, 6:30 pm  
Preservation Cafe: "Window  
Restoration." Northeast Library, 330 7th  
Street NE, lower level. Details: (202) 543-  
0425, info@chrs.org.

**14** Wednesday, 7 pm  
Village Voices: "Talking Turkey: Science,  
Values and the Future of Food." Southeast  
Library, 403 7th Street SE. Details: info@  
capitolhillvillage.org.

**15** Thursday, 7 pm  
Ward 6 Matters: "Putting the 'Public' in  
Public Space." Hill Center, 921  
Pennsylvania Avenue SE. Details:  
chrs.org/putting-the-public-in-  
public-space.

**20** Tuesday, 6:30 pm  
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill  
Townhomes, 750 6th Street SE, 2nd Floor  
board room. Details: info@chrs.org.

### DECEMBER

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

**13** Thursday, 7:30 pm  
CHRS Zoning Committee. Kirby House,  
420 10th Street SE, first floor. Details:  
info@chrs.org.

**18** Tuesday, 6:30 pm  
CHRS Board of Directors, Capitol Hill  
Townhomes, 750 6th Street SE, 2nd Floor  
board room. Details: info@chrs.org.

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copy of this newsletter, please  
consider joining CHRS!  
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