



NEWS

www.chrs.org

May 2020

Looking Back: The Influenza Epidemic of 1918–19

by Nancy Metzger

Capitol Hill’s history is recorded not only in its buildings and in history books but also in the stories that people remember about their lives here on the Hill. During the influenza epidemic of 1918–19, pharmacists on Capitol Hill provided a wide range of services to residents, who included the thousands of “government girls” who had come to the city to help with the WWI effort.

Augustus C. Taylor was proprietor of Taylor’s Pharmacy, at that time at 2nd and C Streets NE. Frank Taylor, then a high school student, remembered his father’s efforts during the epidemic in this oral history interview taken in 1999 by Nancy Metzger.

METZGER: . . . I imagine the influenza epidemic was just horrendous and one of those things that would live in your memory. . . .

TAYLOR: My memory is strange about this. I never saw the horror stories that were told. . . . I was involved in the influenza. My father took me out of high school to help him. We worked—the store was open nearly 24 hours. I’ve seen him sleep in the store, on the floor. Our apartment was just up the street and I worked early and late, all hours.

It got so the doctors were ill. In the meantime they had written so many prescriptions their wives knew what the doctors would do. They even had a code they explained to my father. As I said, we were open all the time. I told [in an article in the *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, Vol. 50, 1998, pg.

508–521] about taking food to the girls’ dormitory. I did that. The doctors told us what these people needed as much as medicine is food.

Of course people who were getting their food were getting ill too. That happened in the boarding houses too. I never saw the cases where bodies accumulated or saw them being taken away. I never saw that in person but I knew that times were very, very bad and conditions were bad in some of the places I delivered medicines.

And then I told [in the CHS article] about the supply of drugs breaking down and my father sending me to Baltimore. But I did that only

Continued on page 7

Do We Have Your Email Address?

The current situation has brought home how important it is for us to be able to contact members, quickly. If you are not currently receiving an electronic version of the newsletter, we do not have your email address on file. Please consider providing it to us. An email that includes your name and address (plus optional phone number) should be sent to Maygene Daniels at danielsmf@comcast.net.

Also in this issue

ARTICLES

- Providence Hospital/Park 2
- CHRS Board Elections..... 3
- Mother’s Day Scavenger Hunt..... 4

COLUMNS

- Thank You, CHRS Supporters..... 7

LOOKING AHEAD

- Mark Your Calendar..... 8

Providence Hospital/Providence Park

By Beth Purcell

Providence Park is greatly valued as a large space for socially-distant outdoor exercise. Until 1956, Providence Hospital occupied square 764 (2nd/3rd/D/E Streets SE).

The Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul founded Providence Hospital in 1861, responding to physicians' request to care for indigent Civil War soldiers (Union and Confederate). The hospital first operated in space donated by the Carroll family. A building program began, completed in 1872, and the tower was constructed during the hospital's renovation between 1900 and 1904. At its height, the hospital had 340 beds, 60 bassinets for newborns, and operated a nursing school.

By 1952, maintenance costs had greatly increased, the physical plant had become inadequate, and a new hospital was needed. However, building it in square 764 would have required closing the existing hospital for two years, so this plan was rejected. The new hospital was built near Catholic University at 1150 Varnum Street NE, and opened in 1956 (it closed in 2019).

The vacant hospital buildings on Capitol Hill were leased to the Commerce Department from 1956 to 1961. In 1962, Providence Associates, a partnership (Dominic F. Antonelli, Jr., Morton W. Noble, Kingdon Gould, and Max A. Bassin), purchased square 764 for \$650,000. The deteriorating buildings were vacated in 1964, and the District government demanded that they be restored or demolished within six months. The partnership decided that if the buildings could not be rented, they would demolish them and did so in fall 1965.

They next sought zoning approval for a complex of 10-story

apartment buildings. The zoning board, whose members included the Architect of the Capitol, rejected the proposal as incompatible with a rowhouse neighborhood. One commentator claimed that the project would set a bad precedent because it could turn Capitol Hill into another Southwest Washington.

A proposal for a parking lot also went nowhere. CHRS opposed the apartments and the parking lot.

In 1971, the partnership failed to persuade Congress to allow a nine-story commercial office building on the site. In 1973, Congress paid \$1.4 million to buy the square with the proviso that any temporary use must be an open green park. The site remained ungraded with rubble and weeds. Suggested uses included a police building, a congressional parking lot, a school and dormitory for congressional pages, and a junior high school.

In 1978, in response to community requests, the square was regraded and renovated as a park. Still, challenges continued. In 1990, the University of California briefly eyed the park for college buildings. CHRS and neighbors rallied to save the park. As a neighbor said in 1990, "We know what we have and I don't think any of us want to see it go," words that remain true. ★



IMAGES COURTESY LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



TOP: Picture of the hospital nurses (1905), courtesy of the Library of Congress (LC-F-25-3904).

BOTTOM: Image of the hospital (1910–1925) courtesy of the Library of Congress (LC-F-82-1053A).

Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President Beth Purcell
First Vice President Maygene Daniels
Second Vice President Tina May
Treasurer Susan Oursler
Secretary Jim Thackaberry
At Large Patrick Lally
At Large Christine Mullins
At Large Beth Hague
At Large Joanna Kendig
At Large Angie Schmidt
At Large Alison Ross
Immediate Past President . . Elizabeth Nelson

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Beyond the Boundaries Beth Purcell
Budget & Administration* Susan Oursler
City Planning* Monte Edwards
Communications* Nina Tristani
Community Development* Chuck Burger
Community Relations Elizabeth Nelson
Environment* Joanna Kendig
Grants Larry Pearl
Historic Preservation* Beth Purcell
House & Garden Tour Elizabeth Nelson
Investments John Shages
Membership* vacant
Public Safety* Undine Nash
Public Space Steve Kehoe
Zoning* Gary Peterson

* Chair is an appointed Board Member

NEWSLETTER

Angie Schmidt and Kelly Vielmo, Editors

WEBMASTERS

Donna Breslin, Elizabeth Nelson

OFFICE MANAGER

Jill Uvena Cullinane

To reach any of the above, please contact the Society offices at (202) 543-0425 or via e-mail: caphrs420@gmail.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

CHRS Board of Directors Elections

By Elizabeth Nelson

The Elections Committee recommendations for the 2020–2021 Board of Directors have been approved by the current Board of Directors. Ballots will be mailed to all CHRS members who are on the rolls as of May 1, 2020. Once distributed, ballots must be completed and returned within two weeks. The results of the election will be announced at the June Membership Meeting, if the meeting can be held, and in the July / August newsletter. If the Membership Meeting must be postponed, the membership will be notified by email as soon as the results can be tabulated.

Beth Purcell has been re-nominated to serve as the President of the Society. Angie Schmidt has been nominated to serve as First Vice-President. Tina May has been re-nominated to serve as Second Vice-President. Jim Thackaberry has been re-nominated as Secretary and Nick Alberti has been re-nominated for Treasurer. Four At-Large Directors have also been nominated: Maygene Daniels, Joanna Kendig, Beth Hague, and Jackie Krieger.



Beth Purcell (President) is currently serving as President and also as Chair of the Historic Preservation

Committee. She moved to Capitol Hill in 1987, and later joined the CHRS board, serving as President from 2009 to 2012. After a career at the Treasury Department, she earned an MS in historic preservation from George Washington University. She is also the President of Trees for Capitol Hill and a member of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City. In her spare time she enjoys walking her dogs.



Angie Schmidt (First Vice-President) is currently serving in an at-large position. She moved with her

family to the circa-1881 house on Capitol Hill in 2002. Her career began in editing and publishing and she currently works part-time handling the financial records and scheduling for a small business on Capitol Hill. She started volunteering with CHRS in 2016, serving as an editor for the CHRS News, which she continues to edit. Angie has always loved cities (her degree at GWU focused on the urban environment) and thinks that Capitol Hill encapsulates all the best parts of what Washington has to offer, both in the very old and historic, and the new and improved.



Tina May (Second Vice-President) is completing her second term in this position. She moved to Capitol Hill

in 1982 for an affordably-priced rental house with college friends and has lived here ever since. Soon thereafter, she and her husband Peter bought their first house in need of restoration. Working with little more than a subscription to the Old House Journal (OHJ) and a lot of patience, they completed that house, and then a second, and are now working on their third (the “gut job”). They have been members of CHRS since at least 2002—back in the days when a membership included a subscription to the OHJ.

Continued on page 6

Celebrate Mother's Day Weekend with a Photo Scavenger Hunt!

Although the 2020 House & Garden Tour must be postponed due to COVID-19, we will honor our 63-year-old tradition with a Photo Scavenger Hunt, a free, family-friendly, "socially distant" outdoor activity that will debut May 8 on our website, chrs.org. Photos of 48 "critters" (including a few humanoids) from across The Hill are included. Some are iconic and immediately recognizable, others more obscure, providing an excuse to check out nooks and crannies you don't often visit. Or be an armchair traveller and enjoy the sights from the comfort of your own home. A map and downloadable handout will be available on the website.

If you find other treasures, we'd would love to see them. Email to HouseTourCHRS@gmail.com with a note of the street address.

We're very grateful to the Hill Rag for featuring this event in their May issue and assisting with creating the map. To show our appreciation, we are promoting them and our other sponsors and advertisers in the Hunt handouts on the website.

Our photographers are Maygene Daniels, Jackie Krieger, Norman Metzger, Elizabeth Nelson, Beth Purcell, and Betsy Rutkowski.

Have fun exploring the whimsy of Capitol Hill! ☆



IMAGES COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON





Jim Thackaberry (Secretary) is currently serving as Secretary. A registered architect, he

moved to Washington in 1974 to work for Harry Weese Associates, the Metro architect. He has been both in private practice and government employment having concluded his career working many years at the District Department of Housing and Community Development. Upon arriving in the city, he settled on Capitol Hill and immediately loved living here. He then bought the townhouse that he's been renovating and restoring. He joined the Restoration Society shortly after moving here. He is also a member of the CHRS Historic Preservation Committee.



Nick Alberti (Treasurer) moved to Capitol Hill in 1985 with his wife, Elizabeth Nelson. They were

attracted to the charming architecture of the Hill and are grateful to have found a home in the Historic District. Nick retired from a career as a statistician with the Census Bureau in 2010. He served as a commissioner in ANC 6A where he was initially the Treasurer and later the Chair. He was appointed to the DC Alcohol Beverage Control Board in 2008, serving 11 years. He is currently a member of the Capitol Hill Village Endowment Board, the CHRS Endowment Committee, the CHRS Zoning Committee and the ANC 6A committees providing advice on zoning and alcohol beverage licensing.



Maygene Daniels (At-Large) and her husband Steve have lived on Capitol Hill for more than 45 years

and raised their children here. She began her career as an archivist at the National Archives, where she advocated for preservation of historic DC Building Permits, which remain a key resource for house histories on Capitol Hill. Subsequently, she founded the archives at the National Gallery of Art, where she worked for more than 30 years. In her decades of archival work, she explored subjects relating to the history, urban development and architecture of the city of Washington, the Mall and Capitol Hill. Maygene is currently working to update the CHRS membership database and is serving on the House and Garden Tour planning committee.



Beth Hague (At-Large) has a lifelong appreciation of historic buildings, preservation, and community which

led her to fall in love with Capitol Hill when she arrived in Washington, DC. Turning to CHRS and the city for expertise, and inspired by community involvement in land use planning, Beth was heavily involved in the effort to establish the Emerald Street Historic District, where she has lived since 2002. Beth serves on the CHRS Board and Zoning Committee, and organizes Membership Meetings. During the week, Beth specializes in China issues at the State Department. In her free time, she enjoys walking through Hill neighborhoods, singing with the Capitol Hill Chorale and serving on their board, attending Chiarina concerts, and hiking with her husband Libo and son Nathaniel.



Joanna Kendig (At-Large) became a Capitol Hill resident in 2008. Since then her attachment to this historic

neighborhood has grown and deepened. Having grown up in post war Europe where many historic cities endured horrific destruction, she savors living in this city where much of the original historic and social fabric remains intact, being largely spared the ravages of urban renewal. Joanna is a firm believer in preserving the past while supporting compatible change. In her architectural career, she worked on both new and historic preservation projects. She serves on the CHRS Historic Preservation Committee and is proud to support CHRS's mission.



Jackie Krieger (At-Large) moved to the Washington DC area over 40 years ago. Landing on Capitol Hill,

she immediately fell in love with the area's history, architecture and community spirit and never left. Jackie recently retired from a career at the Environmental Protection Agency, working primarily in the areas of climate change and pollution prevention. She is currently serving on the CHRS House and Garden Tour committee, managing the advertising and assisting with house selection, and staffing for the event. She also serves as our Little League rep. Jackie currently lives just off Lincoln Park with her 17-year old son Adam. She enjoys working in her garden, traveling, studying the Italian language, and walking with her dog Lucky around the neighborhood. ★

PHOTO BY LIS WACKMAN



Frank Taylor in 1999.

once—with two suitcases and a long list of manufacturers. One of the interesting things that I got then and that we were always running out of was a preventative for the flu that was a little gauze-enclosed square of camphor gum and a square of acetaphetamine. Those two squares were sewn into a gauze pouch and it was worn around the neck.

This was supposed to ward off influenza. Doctors were prescribing it and we were asked for it. (We didn't think it would be very effective; I don't know if it ever has been proven effective.) Later on I read somewhere the tears of the eyes contain some antibiotics and I wonder if just the irritation of breathing this and sometimes inducing tears in eyes might have some something to do with it. That's pretty far-fetched.

METZGER: But when you didn't have penicillin, what were they prescribing?

TAYLOR: Mostly cough and cold medicines, fever remedies. I learned my lesson the second year—I had a very light case. I don't remember anything startling that was given to me. One precaution that many people did follow was—apparently the virus or whatever it was affected the heart to some degree. A lot of people died in the recovery stages. They went back to work too soon, took exercises to get back into shape. We did know that by the time that I got it. I can remember my father telling me to be very careful about walking around. ★

More interviews with Frank Taylor and other residents of Capitol Hill can be found in the Ruth Ann Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project website, capitolhillhistory.org.

Thank you, CHRS Supporters!

Contributors

Annual Appeal

Marci Hilt

Joanna Kendig

David Moore

R. Mark Scowcroft

General Donations

Greater Washington

Community Foundation

House Tour

Supporter

Toby Godfrey

Robert & Hazel Kreinheder

Contributor

Mike & May Hardiman

Benefactor

Trudy & Gary Peterson

General

Lawrence Monaco

Anonymous Donor

Memberships

Silver

Denny Lane & Naoko Aoki

Maygene & Stephen Daniels

Bill Crews & Steve Kehoe

Norman & Nancy Metzger

Follow CHRS on Social Media



@CapHRS



@CHRSDC



CapitolHillRestorationDC



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

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

Mark Your Calendar!

Please check website for current information—cancellations and postponements are expected and will be posted as they are known.

MAY

~~4 Monday, 6:30 pm~~

~~CANCELLED~~

~~CHRS Historic Preservation Committee. For HPRB cases contact Beth Purcell, (202) 544-0178.~~

~~8 Friday~~

~~Mother's Day Scavenger Hunt. Although the 2020 House & Garden Tour must be postponed due to Covid-19, we are honoring this tradition with a Photo Scavenger Hunt, to be launched for Mother's Day Weekend. Visit: chrs.org/mothers-day-scavenger-hunt~~

~~10-11 Saturday & Sunday~~

~~RESCHEDULED~~

~~The House & Garden Tour, originally planned for Mother's Day weekend has been rescheduled on Saturday, September 12, 2020 from 4-7 pm and Sunday, September 13, 2020 from 1-5 p.m.~~

~~19 Tuesday, 6:30 pm~~

~~CANCELLED~~

~~CHRS Board of Directors. Questions: info@chrs.org.~~

~~20 Wednesday, 6:30 pm~~

~~POSTPONED~~

~~Preservation Café: "Lost Farms and Estates of Washington, D.C." Questions: (202) 543-0425, info@chrs.org.~~

~~21 Thursday, 7:30 pm~~

~~POSTPONED~~

~~CHRS Zoning Committee. Questions: info@chrs.org.~~

JUNE

~~1 Monday, 6:30 pm~~

~~CHRS Historic Preservation Committee. Kirby House, 420 10th Street SE, first floor. Details: Beth Purcell, (202) 544-0178. Check chrs.org for updates.~~

~~16 Tuesday, 6:30 pm~~

~~CHRS Board of Directors. Capitol Hill Townhomes, 750 6th Street SE, 2nd Floor board room. Details: info@chrs.org. Check chrs.org for updates.~~

~~18 Thursday, 7:30 pm~~

~~CHRS Zoning Committee. Kirby House, 420 10th Street SE, first floor. Details: info@chrs.org. Check chrs.org for updates.~~

63rd Annual Capitol Hill House and Garden Tour

September 12-13, 2020

More information at (202) 543-0425 or chrs.org

NEW
DATE!