



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

NEWS

www.chrs.org

November 2020

Murals of Capitol Hill: Self-Guided Walking Tour

By Elizabeth Nelson

Just in the last week or so, there's a nip of fall in the air—perfect weather for getting out and about after a long hot summer. The House Tour Committee has put together another free tour for your walking pleasure—the Mural Tour.

As you've no doubt noticed, Capitol Hill is blessed with many examples of this art form, some are well-known neighborhood landmarks; others are tucked away in alleys or painted higher up than your eye usually travels. We've been scurrying about trying to ferret out as many as possible for the collection on our website—at 58 separate locations.



IMAGE COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON

The Message in a Bottle mural at 801 Virginia Avenue SE.

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A New Look at Hill History

By Angie Schmidt

We at CHRS are very pleased to announce that our President, Beth Purcell, has written the newest in Arcadia Publishing's series of local history books, *Capitol Hill (Past and Present)*. The book focuses on how the neighborhood has changed over the years, between the creation of the Capitol and its supporting buildings, the addition of the freeway system on the east side of DC, and the general



movement and development in a thriving area.

The book is filled with before and after photos of the Hill and is a fascinating

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President's Column: Living in a Challenging Year

By Beth Purcell

We are living through a challenging year. Yet, CHRS and its members continue to find creative and safe ways to protect our neighborhood, and adapt to changing circumstances and increased development pressure. We are pulling together to ensure that Capitol Hill remains the place where we want to live, raise our families and spend our retirement years.

In a normal year, CHRS offers many in-person educational and entertaining events such as the House & Garden Tour, walking tours, the House Expo at Eastern Market North Hall, the Dick Wolf Memorial Lecture, membership forums presenting interesting speakers and Preservation Cafés. And CHRS participates in community-building activities: Hilloween, Barracks Row Fall Festival and sponsoring the Restoration Nats Little League team.

We have responded to the Covid-19 challenge by offering free educational programs, either socially distanced or online:

- Whimsy of Capitol Hill Photo Scavenger Hunt
- Historic Sites Scavenger Hunt
- What I Love About My House
- Virtual House Tour
- Mural Tour
- Preservation Cafés

Check out these resources on our website at chrs.org.

Throughout the year our dedicated volunteers also represent your interests before regulatory agencies. And in between all that, we've made time to address your concerns. We regularly answer questions about home maintenance, house histories, zoning and historic preservation cases, inappropriate

signage, development of public property or transportation planning.

CHRS and volunteers are working hard to serve you. None of this work would be possible without your help. As you know, our volunteer organization takes a lot of time and effort by many, many people. It also takes a lot of money, and this year we could not hold an in-person House Tour, our primary fundraiser. Your contribution helps CHRS to continue to expand its activities.

That is why we are asking you to please consider a tax-deductible gift to the CHRS Annual Fund in addition to your membership dues.

Please be as generous as you can; your gift really will make a difference in keeping Capitol Hill the vibrant, beautiful, historic neighborhood we all love. Please go to our website: chrs.org/join-chrs.

Thank you for your membership and support of CHRS. We wish you a happy and healthy holiday season. Best wishes for a fabulous Capitol Hill 2021! ★

Hill History Book, *continued from cover*

read. Purcell spent 10 months researching and gathering materials, and it shows! It is also an interesting study on historic preservation and what happens when development is unchecked.

Capitol Hill (Past and Present) will be available from the publisher and at our local book stores on November 9, 2020. As a bonus, all royalties will be donated to CHRS.

Congratulations, Beth! ★

Membership Vote

In September 2020, by a mail-in vote, CHRS members approved the following actions:

- 1) The budget for fiscal year 2020-2021, and
- 2) Amending the bylaws to allow the board of directors to meet by teleconference.

Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

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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

Zoning Report

by Gary Peterson

The CHRS Zoning Committee considered the following cases via email.

BZA #20300, 1309 Potomac Avenue SE.

The applicant in this case needs a special exception from the lot occupancy requirements to build a two-story garage with a second-floor studio. The studio will have a full bathroom. The house currently occupies 40% of the lot and the new garage will cover 30% for a new total of 70%. A special exception is needed to go from the allowable 60% to 70%. Neighbors on both sides of the property have sent letters of support. The committee voted to support the application.

BZA #20301, 229 14th Street NE. This case involves the request for special exception to allow for a two-story rear enlargement to an existing two-story single-family row house. A special exception is needed because the rear wall of the addition shall not extend 10 feet beyond the farthest rear wall of any adjoining residential building. In this case, the proposed rear wall will extend 16 feet past the rear walls of the adjoining residential properties to the north and south or 6 feet more than allowed. The committee voted to oppose the application for several reasons:

- 1) There is no letter of support from the neighbor at 231 14th Street,
- 2) The shadow study shows undue impact to the backyard at 231, and
- 3) The addition will have eight new windows facing the backyard of 227 14th Street, harming the privacy of this neighbor.

BZA #20310, 128 12th Street SE.

This case involves a request for a lot occupancy special exception to increase the lot occupancy from 55% to 63%. The applicant proposes to

construct a one-story addition that will be 4 feet short of one neighbor's rear wall and 4 feet beyond the other neighbor's wall. The applicant is extending the existing dogleg. Both neighbors have filed letters of support. The committee voted to support the application.

BZA #20311, 646 E Street NE. The applicant proposes building a two-story rear addition that will increase the lot occupancy from 53% to 66% and will extend more than 14 feet beyond the rear wall of the house to the east, 468 E Street. The addition will fill in a dogleg. The owner of 468 E Street has not filed a letter of support. The shadow study shows that 468 E Street will be substantially impacted by the addition especially in the afternoon from 2pm onward. The committee voted to oppose the application because:

- 1) There is no letter of support from the neighbor at 468 E Street,
- 2) The shadow study shows undue impact to the backyard at 468 E Street, and
- 3) The addition is 14 feet deep instead of the allowed 10 feet. Reducing the depth of the addition would solve the shadow problems.

Future Cases to be Considered

The following cases will be heard on these dates:

- BZA #20315, 14 5th Street NE, November 15, 2020
- BZA #20323, Maury School parking lot, December 2, 2020
- BZA #20333, 1165 3rd Street NE, December 9, 2020
- BZA #20335, 741 12th Street SE, December 16, 2020

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Historic Preservation Briefs

By Beth Purcell

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB or the Board) considered the following cases at its virtual hearing on September 24 and October 1, 2020. 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.

28 9th Street SE, HPA 20-417, concept/ rooftop addition. J. A. Rodbird built this rowhouse for S. A. Lawton in 1889. It is a contributing building with a minimal yard served by a pedestrian alley. The applicant proposed to build a small third story addition pulled back from the front of the house, set into the roof of the second story to lower the addition’s height and reduce visibility.

We believed that the addition’s design and materials are simple and appropriate. The addition appears to be minimally visible from the street. This is a difficult site; the applicant has made a good faith effort to design such a small rooftop addition, and therefore we believe that this project is compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District. The Board approved the project.

Consent calendar. The following cases, which CHRS supported, were approved on the consent calendar:

- **610 A Street SE**, HPA 20-464, concept/ three-story addition at rear; alterations to garage.
- **712 E Street SE**, HPA 20-476, concept/ add third story to existing two-story building (commercial garage).
- **312 3rd Street NE**, HPA 20-337, permit/ two-story rear addition. ★



28 9th Street SE.

Interested in learning more about historic district designation?

Contact CHRS at info@chrs.org.

November Preservation Café: Lost Farms and Estates of Washington, D.C.

Architectural historian Kim Prothro Williams will describe her fascination with life as it existed in agrarian Washington before the city became the seat of our national government during the upcoming CHRS virtual Preservation Café on Wednesday, November 18 at 6:30 pm.

The discovery of a springhouse from a mid-1800s farm two blocks off Wisconsin Avenue launched Williams on a search for other remnants of Washington’s rural past. After much effort and research, she and her team from the D.C. Historic Preservation

Office identified some 84 structures that have survived to tell the tale of rural Washington.

Williams’s book, *Lost Farms and Estates of Washington, D.C.*, details the history of the owners of these remaining buildings, sheds light on now-demolished buildings, and relates how the new capital area grew, including the role of slavery and the devastation of the Civil War. The book is available at local bookstores. ★

CHRS Preservation Cafés are free to CHRS members and non-members. We hope to see you online on November 18 at 6:30 pm. Join us at www.chrs.org.

October Preservation Café: Homicide on the Hill

By Christine Mullins

On October 21, Robert Pohl, local historian, author, and Washington tour guide, gave participants of the CHRS Preservation Café an early Halloween treat with a tour of some grisly events that have taken place in our Capitol Hill neighborhood.

“What could possibly go wrong?” Pohl asked the CHRS attendees while looking at his opening seemingly-bucolic, headline picture of Capitol Hill from the Capitol Dome. His answer: “a whole lot.” Capitol Hill has had its share of homicides—even the white-domed Capitol was the scene of a brutal murder—although the more likely backdrop of these murderous events were the dark alleyways and tiny hovels located in the poorer sections of town.

Several of those who committed the murders Pohl described were able to escape justice with pleas of temporary insanity. For example, Joseph Bradley, the defense attorney for Daniel W. Jarboe who shot John Rufus Nally on Navy Yard Hill (now



IMAGES COURTESY ROBERT POHL

ABOVE: Sickles shoots Barton Key in President's Square. BELOW: Strong prepares the gallows for Guiteau.

Barracks Row) on May 15, 1856, explained that Jarboe was temporarily “out of his mind.” Jarboe was enraged when he learned Nally did not intend to marry Jarboe’s pregnant sister. During the final violent street encounter, Jarboe asked Nally if he would rectify the situation and the response must have been negative.

The two attorneys, Joseph Bradley and Philip Barton Key, argued for and against the defendant in the old City Hall, which is now the D.C. Court of Appeals at Judiciary Square. Ironically, three years later in 1859, Daniel E. Sickles used the same insanity defense Jarboe had used when he shot Philip Barton Key (Jarboe’s prosecutor) in Lafayette Square just across from the White House, for romancing Sickles’s wife. Sickles was also able to successfully convince the jury that he was temporarily insane.

One of Washington’s most infamous murders took place in 1881 at the Baltimore Potomac Railway Station at Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue, NW when Charles J. Guiteau

shot President James Garfield, who died several months after the attack. The trial was “truly a circus,” explained Pohl. Guiteau, who many described as clearly “deranged,” tried to defend himself through his written poems that argued Garfield had really died from an infection the doctors caused when they tried to remove the bullet from Garfield’s body. Guiteau was taken to the city jail at 19th Street and Independence Avenue SE, near today’s D.C. Armory, before he was hanged by Robert Strong, Washington’s executioner for 30 years.

Pohl explained that no congressman has been killed while serving in office within the city of Washington, DC. However, Charles Kincaid, a Kentucky news reporter, did shoot William P. Taulbee, an ex-congressman, on the Capitol steps. During the trial, Kincaid successfully argued self defense because he said Taulbee had harassed him incessantly after the congressman had left office and continued to hang around the Capitol as a real estate lobbyist.

The bad feelings between the men had begun when Kincaid wrote a story about a scandalous incident when Taulbee was caught romancing



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Mural Tour, continued from cover

If you see that we missed something special, please email the address to HouseTourCHRS@gmail.com and we'll add it.

While the Tour can be enjoyed from the comfort and safety of your home, we recommend an in-person visit. Art is always best appreciated on-site; particularly true in this case where the scale and placement of the work made photography a challenge.

Images of all the murals and a downloadable handout can be found at chrs.org/mural-tour. Don't have a printer? Look for a map and additional photos in the October 2020 issue of the *Hill Rag*. Please share this link with your friends and social media outlets. We want as many people as possible to enjoy the experience. ★



IMAGES COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON



Zoning Briefs, continued from page 3

- BZA #20336, 1447 Maryland Avenue NE, December 16, 2020
- BZA #20340, 114 12th Street NE, December 23, 2020

If you have questions, please contact committee Chair Gary Peterson at pgaryl@comcast.net or (202) 352-0098. ★



TOP: Garage at 130 D Street SE.

ROW 2, LEFT: *You Are Loved*, 1333 H Street NE;
RIGHT: 1257 Wylie Street NE.

ROW 3: 1320 H Street NE.

LEFT: 317 Pennsylvania Avenue SE.

Hill Center Presents Pottery On the Hill—Online!

By Elizabeth Nelson

This year, our friends at Hill Center are taking Pottery on the Hill online, with 45 potters who have participated in years past. The potters' on-line stores will open at 5 pm on Friday, November 13 and run through Sunday, November 15.

Also, each one of the potters has donated a pot for a silent auction to benefit Hill Center. From November

5–15, you'll be able to view and bid on them. Last but not least, Dan Finnegan is making a special series of commemorative mugs; proceeds will support Hill Center operations amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

For more information, visit: hillcenterdc.org/artist/pottery-on-the-hill-2020-2. ★

Preservation Café, *continued from page 5*

a Capitol Hill resident while visiting the U.S. Patent Office. In his article, Kincaid described Taulbee's paramore, Linda Dodge, as "a little beauty, bright as sunshine, and saucy as a bowl of jelly. She is petite of figure, but plump as a partridge. Her hair is brown, her eyes blue, cheeks like peaches, lips like rosebuds dripped with dew."

Pohl also described a murder that took place the day after President Taft's inauguration in 1909 at the Capitol Hill police station at Marion Park, which was designed by Adolph Cluss and built in 1901. William Mathews, the commander of the Fifth Precinct station was a stickler for regulation and called John Collier, a young police officer who had a reputation for being late and lackadaisical, into his office for calling in sick one too many times. During the meeting, shots were fired and police officers found Collier with a smoking pistol and Mathews dead on the floor. Needless to say, a colorful court trial ensued and Collier ended up serving 15 years for manslaughter.

Pohl described the unsolved murder that took place on New Year's Eve in 1931 of Beulah Limerick, a flapper and founder

of the Sky High Whoopie Club. The murder likely occurred in the wooden shack where she lived, near what is now Stadium Armory Metro. When Limerick was found dead in her bed the next morning, the doctor and hospital that examined her body determined she had died of a hemorrhage. However, the undertaker later concluded her death was really caused by a shot to the head by a 22-caliber bullet. Sadly, none of the six suspects who all seemed to have a motive for committing the crime were found guilty and the real murderer was never found or brought to justice.

Finally, Pohl described an assassination attempt of Senator John W. Bricker of Ohio that occurred on July 12, 1947, by the disgruntled ex-Capitol Hill police officer William Kaiser who had recently been let go. Shots rang out on the Capitol monorail subway system. Everyone scattered, but no one was injured. When no bullets were found, the police concluded Kaiser had been firing blanks and was not of sound mind. Nonetheless, Kaiser was indicted for the attack, determined to be insane, and spent the rest of his days at St. Elizabeth's Hospital.

At the start of his presentation, Pohl had explained that historians like himself benefit greatly from the lengthy news descriptions of contentious trials and courtroom brawls that usually follow a "good juicy murder." While some murders were simple tawdry acts of spite and anger, others have had long-lasting consequences. ★

Robert Pohl is the author of Urban Legends & Historic Lore of Washington, D.C., Wicked Capitol Hill: An Unruly History of Behaving Badly, and writes for the blog The Hill is Home. Reach him with a question or line up a tour at: facebook.com/RobertPohlAuthor.



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.

NOVEMBER

13–15 Friday–Sunday, 5pm

Our friends at Hill Center are staging this annual event online. The Pottery on the Hill website will be your gateway to the online stores of the potters. The potters' stores will open at 5 pm on Friday, November 13 and run through Sunday, November 15. More information at: hillcenterdc.org/artist/pottery-on-the-hill-2020-2.

18 Wednesday, 6:30pm

Preservation Café: "Lost Farms and Estates of Washington, D.C." A WebEx link and call in number will be posted prior to the meeting: chrs.org/lost-farms-estates-preservation-cafe.

The **CHRS House Expo** has been rescheduled to Saturday, October 30, 2021, from 10 am–4 pm at the Eastern Market North Hall, featuring a wide variety of home service exhibitors. This year's event (originally scheduled for October 24, 2020) couldn't be held due to the pandemic.

Thank You, CHRS Supporters!

CHRS wishes to thank the following donors for their invaluable support:

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