



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

NEWS

www.chrs.org

March 2021

Explore the History of Your Capitol Hill House and Community

By Christine Mullins

On February 17, Maygene Daniels, architectural archivist and Capitol Hill neighbor, outlined five easy steps you can take to research the history of your home and your immediate Capitol Hill community. While our D.C. public libraries, the Library of Congress, the National Archives, and the D.C. History Center may be closed to physical visitors, plenty of resources are freely available online for you to discover the history of your home, and the stores, churches, schools, and other buildings that surround it.

Daniels began her discussion with images of the city-wide plan that Pierre Charles L'Enfant created in

1790. George Washington was deeply engaged in this city planning—his vision shaped the city in more ways than his commission of L'Enfant to build a simple street plan. For example, the president's administration issued the city's first building regulations which encouraged townhouse development and shaped a future of orderly growth.

Daniels said Washington's regulations required every house to stand squarely on its block, a requirement that allowed the neighborhoods to grow as they did. While construction was erratic and occurred in fits-and-starts, the buildings and streets eventually

formed a logical framework as part of a coherent whole. John Duncan, a Scottish visitor, noted that building construction in Washington did not emanate from a central location, such as from a city center as in many European cities. Instead, neighborhoods grew "all at once," in 20–30 different locations.

Growth on Capitol Hill first centered around the eastern and southern sides of the Capitol building, and to the north and west of the Navy Yard. These were the centers of employment in an economically and socially diverse community.

Continued on page 6

CHRS Statement on Capitol Hill Fencing

The Capitol Hill Restoration Society strongly urges:

- 1) That the unsightly and overbearing metal and razor wire fence now in place should immediately be removed.
- 2) That Congress should establish a commission to study and recommend how best to permanently protect the Capitol while respecting its historic and architectural integrity and the practical requirements of citizen access.

To read the full letter sent to the Capitol Police Board and the Congressional Oversight Committees, go to: chrs.org/removing-us-capitol-fence.

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2021 Mother's Day "Tour of Tours"

By Elizabeth Nelson on behalf of the House Tour Committee

As reported in the February newsletter we're planning a series of outdoor walking tours for Mother's Day weekend (May 8-9), in lieu of the traditional in-person House & Garden Tour. We hope to have something of interest for every member of the Capitol Hill community. We've chosen the following themes:

- **Hollywood on the Hill** (filming locations and early movie projection sites),
- **Resistance** (sites significant to civil rights for women, minorities and the LGBTQ+ community),
- **Our Industrial Past** (industrial and commercial sites, many of which have been repurposed),
- **Parks: Treasures of Capitol Hill** (the history of Marion and Garfield Parks and their surrounding neighborhood),
- **Whimsy of Capitol Hill** (search for amusing yard ornaments—a guided version, with fresh

images, of the scavenger hunt posted on our website last year),

- **Notable People of Capitol Hill** (sites associated with many of the historically significant people who have lived on Capitol Hill),
- **Community Evolution near Logan School** (focusing on the neighborhood east of Union Station, a look at how the city and citizens turned once-unbuildable land into a welcoming neighborhood.)

Art at Home

We're also organizing an *Art at Home* gallery, inviting local artists to display their work on their porches or in a tented front yard. We anticipate that the Capitol Hill Art League will participate as well as artists associated with the Hill Center. But we particularly hope to have CHRS members involved. If you're willing, please let us know. Not sure or have questions? Shoot us an email. And please pass this on to other artists.

This is definitely a case of "the more the merrier."

The Tour Committee (Beth Purcell, Betsy Rutkowski, Carey Paquette, Elizabeth Nelson, Fynnette Eaton, Heather Schoell, Jackie Krieger, Joanna Kendig, Nancy Metzger, Karine Semple, Mike Canning) is off to a good start with the planning but the execution will require many more volunteers.

To make the experience safe and enjoyable, we'll be limiting the number of people on each of the tours, which means we will need to run each tour multiple times. This will require a lot of docents on tour weekend. We'll also need volunteers to assist with advance publicity, preparing materials and other tasks.

Plan now to join the fun of producing this "Tour of Tours"—send a note to HouseTourCHRS@gmail.com. Look for additional details, as they develop, at: chrs.org/house-and-garden-tour. ★

Photo Contest 2021: "The Capitol Hill Home"

By Elizabeth Nelson

Once again, the Society is sponsoring a photo contest: "The Capitol Hill Home." Entries are due April 1, 2021.

We're privileged to live in an environment that is a delight to the eye, with tree shaded streets, lush gardens, yard ornaments, and houses with a wealth of architectural detail. Iron stoops, arched windows, stained glass transoms, ornate brickwork, welcoming porches...all hallmarks of the quintessential Capitol Hill home.

We'd like to hear how you define "The Capitol Hill Home." Even better, show us! Take a high resolution (1MB+) exterior shot of what you think makes a Capitol Hill home and email it to HouseTourCHRS@gmail.com. Cell phone photos can be texted to (202) 329-7864. Include your name and address, email address, and the address of the property in the photo.

The winning images will be awarded two complimentary passes to the next in-person House &

Garden Tour and displayed on the CHRS website.

In submitting your photo to the CHRS Capitol Hill Home photo contest, you agree that it will become the property of CHRS, which may reproduce, modify, and digitize and adapt the photograph. You retain the right to continued use of the image.

For more details (and photos of past winners), visit: chrs.org/photo-contest-2021. ★

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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 has considered the following cases:

BZA 20333, 1165 3rd Street NE. The applicant proposes to construct an addition that would add a third story atop the existing building and add a three-story rear addition extending 10 feet past the existing rear wall of the applicant's house and the rear walls of the north and south adjacent rowhouses. The plans also show a roof deck accessed by a hatch and enclosed with extensions to the existing parapet walls, rather than railings.

At the last minute, the applicant filed new plans and filed a request for a waiver for the late filing. The committee opposed the request for waiver and asked for more time to review the new plans. The committee objects to the application for a third floor because there are no letters of support from either abutting neighbor. The case has been reset for April 28.

BZA 20369, 909-911 I Street NE. In this case the applicant proposes to demolish two, two story row houses on the west end of a row of six houses that were built in 1872. The applicant wants to build in their place two, two flat, three-story houses with a penthouse. He needs several special exceptions:

- 1) A special exception to construct a penthouse for roof access and storage, and
- 2) A special exception because the penthouse and solar panels are not set back at a 1:1 ratio, and
- 3) A special exception from the rear addition requirements to extend 18.25 feet beyond the rear wall of the neighbor, and
- 4) A special exception for the construction of a guardrail.

The lot occupancy is increasing from 39% to 60% and no special exception is needed for this increase. The Committee didn't like the demolition of the existing historic houses and believed that the new houses must respect the remaining historic house built at the same time. The Committee voted to oppose the penthouse and the extension that is more than 10 feet beyond the rear wall of the neighbor.

BZA 20371, 1507 E Street SE. The committee voted to support this application. The applicant wants to add a two-story rear addition and a third floor above the existing house. Three special exceptions are required:

- 1) The addition increases the lot occupancy from 54% to 70%, where 60% is allowed as a matter of right
- 2) The addition extends 12' 2" beyond the rear walls of both neighbors, where 10 feet is allowed as a matter of right, and
- 3) The rear yard will be reduced to only 14 feet, where 20 feet is required.

BZA 20379, 514 9th Street SE. The applicant requires a special exception to extend a rear wall 12 feet beyond the rear wall of adjoining property. The special exception is for 2 feet. The applicant proposes to construct a 12-foot deep by 14.3-foot wide second story addition atop an existing one-story addition with the same footprint.

The addition will have a bank of three windows on the rear-facing east side, two-windows on the south side facing the blank wall of the second story addition across a court at 516

Continued on page 4

Historic Preservation Briefs

By Alison Ross and Beth Purcell

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB or the Board) considered the following cases at its virtual hearing on January 28 and February 4, 2021. 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.

921 G Street SE, HPA 21-132, concept/fill in dogleg, add third story. This rowhouse is one of four built in 1872 by Joseph Walsh. It is a two-bay two-story frame house, a contributing building. On the front elevation, the architectural details at the cornice will remain; the front door will be replaced in kind. No other changes were planned.

The applicant planned a rear third story addition for this small house, fourth in from 10th Street SE.

Based on the lumber mockup illustrating the dimensions of the proposed addition, it appeared that the addition will be minimally visible across G Street, when viewed straight on. The mock up was somewhat visible from a short distance west on G Street and was highly visible from 10th Street SE.

HPA 18-671 and 19-140 concerned **302 South Carolina Avenue SE**, a three-story house second in from the corner. The applicant proposed a two-story rear addition and a rooftop

addition that would have been very visible from public space. The Board approved the two story addition, with modifications.

In this case, the staff noted that the proposed three-story addition would be highly visible from public space, is therefore not compatible, and that a two-story addition no higher than the existing house would be compatible. We supported the staff report, and the Board agreed, approving a two-story addition.

The applicant also proposed to infill the dogleg in this row of houses with some already infilled doglegs. For this reason we agreed with the staff report and believed that the proposed infill raised no preservation concerns.

Consent calendar. CHRS participated in this case:

- **229 8th Street NE**, HPA 21-091, concept/two-story accessory structure with garage and green roof. ★

IMAGE COURTESY BETH PURCELL



921 G Street SE.

Zoning Briefs, continued from page 3

9th Street SE and no windows on the north side, facing the yard of 512 9th Street. The neighbor at 512 9th Street has not written a letter of support and the committee voted to support the application on the condition of either obtaining a letter of support or a valid reason for not obtaining one.

BZA 20381, 314 10th Street SE. The applicant proposes constructing a rear addition that is 2-stories on the northern side and 1-story on the southern side by filling in the

first-floor dogleg. The construction requires a special exception to increase the lot occupancy from 67.5% to 70%. The L'Enfant Trust, which has an easement on all sides of the house's façade, reviewed the project and has given preliminary approval.

There is no letter of support from 312 10th Street. In this case the addition does not extend beyond the rear walls of either abutting property so the lack of a letter isn't as critical as usual. The committee supports application with the condition that a letter of support is filed or a valid reason for not obtaining one is given. ★

Interested in learning more about historic district designation?

Contact CHRS at info@chrs.org.

CHRS Urges Temporary Suspension of All 5G Installations with “Cabinetry”

By Beth Purcell

Wireless carriers are installing “small cell” (or “5G”) technology using lower-powered antennas placed more closely than existing roof-mounted equipment and larger cell towers. These small cell installations will increase the capacity of companies’ networks to handle the data traffic and aid in providing 5G service. CHRS supports 5G service for Washington.

Small cell technology will be installed primarily on poles in public space. One of the major issues at the hearings in 2018 and 2019 before the Public Space Committee (PSC) on small cell technology was installing “cabinetry” on street light poles. Cabinetry is a metal box containing small cell infrastructure. See the photographs for examples.

In some cities, this cabinetry is the size of a USPS postal box. We understand that once a carrier receives a permit to install small cell infrastructure, it is allowed to install additional infrastructure on that pole at a later time. Therefore, it is possible that small cabinetry installed in 2021 could later be replaced by much larger cabinetry. For these reasons there is great public interest in standards and regulation of cabinetry.

After the public hearings, PSC published *The Small Cell Design Guidelines* (3rd version March 2019), stating that:

...except for Small Cell Infrastructure attached to wooden poles, Small Cell infrastructure requiring any cabinetry, including pole mounted or ground level, is not to be installed until the cabinetry design has been reviewed and formally adopted by the PSC as part of these guidelines. (*Guidelines*, section 5.3.1.)



As far as we can determine, PSC has never issued guidance on cabinetry. Nevertheless, a wireless carrier has installed small cell equipment with cabinetry on the 1500 block of T Street NW and at 16th Street and Riggs Place NW.

Carriers may have already installed 5G equipment with cabinetry at other locations and may be planning such installations on Capitol Hill. If PSC adheres to its own rules, it should require that cabinetry

installations be functional, uniform, and as attractive as possible.

PSC got off to a good start with public engagement on *The Small Cell Design Guidelines*. For these reasons CHRS urges the PSC to begin public engagement on cabinetry installations, and suspend issuing permits on cabinetry installations on metal poles until cabinetry guidelines are properly developed and finalized.

See CHRS letter at: chrs.org/halt-5g-installations-pending-guidance. ★

IMAGES COURTESY CHARLES ROBERTSON

In a 1836 map, Daniels pointed to Christ Church Episcopal, St. Peter's Catholic Church, and Henry McNeal Turner's Israel Bethel AME Church which is said to have been a stop on the Underground Railroad. This church was also the first place in Washington where African American troops enlisted. In this map, Daniels noted that much of the rest of Capitol Hill was completely empty.

Daniels showed the intricacies of the map A. Boschke and Julius Bien created in 1857 which details the houses, blocks, pathways, tracks of land, and yet-to-be-built city streets that crossed Capitol Hill. However, few houses survived the Civil War.

Daniels showed the map E.F.M. Faetz and Fred W. Pratt created in 1873 which displayed the infrastructure of a modern city with spots for buildings, railroads, sewers, water mains, and fireplugs.

Daniels said it is much easier to research specific buildings after 1874, when the city began to require developers to obtain official building permits. These documents

often display detailed construction information and include sketches of facades and other drawings. All of the permits from 1877–1949 are available at the National Archives. Microfilm permits are also available at the DC Public Library Washingtoniana Collection and the Historical Society of Washington (now DC History Center).

Other sources include the real estate atlases and fire insurance maps that became popular in the late 1800's, such as the detailed Real Estate Plat Book published by Griffith M. Hopkins in 1893. This atlas outlines the footprints of the houses, their sheds, stables, and the building materials (with brick houses in pink and frame houses in yellow).

Daniels reviewed the five steps she suggested you follow when researching your house history:

Visit History Quest DC (www.historyquestdc.com). Begin your search with a visit to this informative online resource from the Historic Preservation Office which lists the building year, architect, builder, and first owner of the houses on Capitol Hill. Note that the buildings are color-coded: older buildings are darker than the new.

Examine city maps, atlases and real estate maps. For example, in addition to the buildings on Capitol Hill, the maps in the Hopkins Atlas pinpoint community intricacies, such as the building materials, mailboxes, sewers, stables, street lamps, wells, and road paving (or lack thereof). Consider using the index to save time by narrowing down your search.

D.C. Architects Directory. Search this resource for biographical details on the architects who served the Capitol Hill community (planning.dc.gov/publication/dc-architects-directory).

Personal name search. City directories, such as the 1885 directory by W.H. Boyd, are widely available online. The directories from 1914–1973 have reverse listings so you can look up an address without having to know the name of the building occupant.

Everything else. Daniels said her last research category includes a variety of sources. For example, you might search on the architectural features of the house, additions, neighboring houses, or noteworthy buildings nearby. The Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS) website includes the history and descriptions of the many houses it has featured in its annual house tour. Many images and photographs are available from 1950 on—take a look at the Wymer's DC website (www.wymersdc.com) which includes historical photos taken from various locations across the city.

Additional historical directories will become available when the city's public research rooms open up once again. These include the National Archives, the DC Public Library Washingtoniana Collection, and the Historical Society of Washington (now the DC History Center). Note that many of these histories include information about current houses and those that were torn down. Examining the tax and assessment directories may be the best way to research the buildings that may have existed and were replaced.

Details on the research sites Daniels recommended are posted in her two handouts on the CHRS website: "Five Easy Online Steps to Learn about Capitol Hill Buildings," and "Principal Online and In-Person Capitol Hill House History Resources." A recording of this presentation is available at: chrs.org/exploring-house-history-preservation-cafe. ★

Do We Have Your Email Address?

If you're not receiving email from CHRS, it's probably because we do not have your address! We'd like to be able to send you event notices and advance copies of the newsletter, electronically. And, as we get closer to Tour weekend, there will be developments that won't fit the newsletter timeline. We promise not to flood your in-box; most months there are only 2 or 3 email blasts. To join our list, please send us an email at: CapHRS420@gmail.com.

The Botanic Gardens and the Senate Park Commission: Three Decades of Controversy

By Christine Mullins

Throughout the first quarter of the 20th century a titanic struggle took place at the foot of the U.S. Capitol—Washington’s planners versus the Botanic Garden. The Senate Park Commission (or McMillan) Plan of 1902 was a design to utterly transform the Mall into a single, unified composition. All the individual segments from the Washington Monument eastward would be brought into harmony, unifying the agriculture, Smithsonian, DC Armory, and Botanic Gardens grounds.

Best intentions, stubborn bureaucracy, limited funding, political feuding, and memorial trees all stood in the way of that goal. The most resistant was the Botanic Gardens, led by William R. Smith. The area adjacent was getting crowded. The Grant Memorial was placed to head the Mall, elbowing into the gardens.

The Meade Memorial took its place at Pennsylvania and 3rd NW—looking in vain to a companion memorial where the gardens still sat. It was not until 1927 that the gardens gave way, moving just a block south (the Bartholdi fountain moved too). Transformations continued until the 1970s, giving us the landscape of today.

Matthew Gilmore is an independent scholar who specializes in the history of Washington, DC and the metro area. He has published several books and articles on a wide variety of topics related to DC history. He is the editor of the H-DC discussion list

and blogs on Washington history and related subjects at: matthewgilmore.wordpress.com. Gilmore served as reference librarian at the Washingtoniana Division of the DC Public Library for many years. ✪

Join us for this virtual CHRS Preservation Cafe, Wednesday, March 17 at 6:30 pm. A WebEx link and call in number will be posted prior to the meeting at: chrs.org/botanic-gardens-pc.

Upcoming Preservation Cafés

April

Building with Mosaics

Jim Miller, Artist and Renovator

Wednesday, April 21 at 6:30 pm

Details: chrs.org/mosaic-design-pc.

May

Adaptive Reuse of Our Alley Buildings

Justine Bello, Architectural Conservator

Wednesday, May 19 at 6:30 pm

Details: chrs.org/adaptive-reuse-alley-buildings-pc.

Our CHRS Preservation Cafés are free to CHRS members and non-members. We hope to see you online at chrs.org!

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CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

Capitol Hill Restoration Society
420 10th Street SE
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Mark Your Calendar!

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

MARCH

17 Wednesday, 6:30pm

Preservation Café: “The Botanic Gardens and the Senate Park Commission: Three Decades of Controversy.” A WebEx link and call in number will be posted prior to the meeting. Details: chrs.org/botanic-gardens-pc.

APRIL

1 Thursday

In anticipation of the 64th anniversary of the Mothers Day House and Garden Tour, the Society is holding a photo contest, “The Capitol Hill Home.” Submit entries at: chrs.org/photo-contest-2021.

21 Wednesday, 6:30pm

Preservation Café: “Mosaic Designs for a Capitol.” A WebEx link and call in number will be posted prior to the meeting. Details: chrs.org/mosaic-design-pc.

MAY

8-9 Saturday & Sunday

Mother’s Day “Tour of Tours.” Read the article in this newsletter or visit: chrs.org/house-and-garden-tour to learn more!

19 Wednesday, 6:30pm

Preservation Café: “Adaptive Reuse of Our Alley Buildings.” A WebEx link and call in number will be posted prior to the meeting. Details: chrs.org/adaptive-reuse-alley-buildings-pc.

Historic Sites Tour 2020

To celebrate Capitol Hill’s rich and diverse history, we’ve arranged a self-guided walking tour of 46 sites, a small sampling of the hundreds of other cultural treasures available to enjoy: chrs.org/historic-sites-tour-2020.

Mural Tour 2020

We’ve been slipping down alleys and craning our necks to document as many Capitol Hill murals as we can locate. The Tour can be enjoyed from the comfort of your own home but the scale of the art makes it much better in person: chrs.org/mural-tour.

63rd Annual Capitol Hill (Virtual) House Tour

Our free, 3-D, #StayAtHome House Tour has gone virtual!
Visit: chrs.org/house-garden-tour-2020

#StayAtHome
House Tour