



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

NEWS

www.chrs.org

October 2021

Fall Guided Walking Tours: Come Tour with Us!

By Elizabeth Nelson

If you weren't available to enjoy the walking tours in May or September—or loved them and want more—you are in luck. We'll offer four tours the weekend of November 13–14, 2021.

The popular Capitol Hill Alleys and Architecture on Capitol Hill will each have two showings. We'll also reprise Parks: Treasures of Capitol Hill and The Resistance. Need a refresher on the tour themes?

Parks: Treasures of Capitol Hill Tour.

When Pierre Charles L'Enfant developed his 1791 plan for the City of Washington he established a network of public spaces, squares, linked by broad avenues. Marion Park is one such square. On the Parks tour, learn how this quintessential community amenity contributed to the evolution of the surrounding

residential neighborhood, its architecture and its inhabitants.

Resistance Tour. Capitol Hill institutions and residents have stood up for political, social, and cultural change in the area of civil, women's, and LGBTQ+ rights. Some names are well known, like Frederick Douglass and John Lewis. Others, including Mabel Vernon and Myrtilla Miner are less familiar. Join this tour to see sites significant to our city and our country.

Architecture on the Hill Tour. Capitol Hill is a primer for connoisseurs of architectural styles, a fantasy-land for masons, and a dream for lovers of stained glass and other embellishments. This tour will explore the intersection of taste and

Continued on page 2



IMAGE COURTESY HEATHER SCHOELL

Missed The Resistance in May? It's back in November.

The HOME EXPO is Back!

Join us in Eastern Market North Hall on October 30, 10 am–4 pm for our annual HOME EXPO, featuring over 30 exhibitors of home craftsman and city services for your home. Talk with and meet exhibitors we are inviting in historic restoration, electric work, solar, roofing, security, construction, window repair, water and energy conservation, and so much more. Also on hand will be representatives from DCRA, DC Department of Energy, DC Water, DCFEM and MPD to discuss home regulations, grant programs, home safety, rental licensing, regulations and answer any other questions. Hope to see you there!

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function that led to the development of the many building styles evident in this historic neighborhood. Learn about the changing fashions and practical considerations that informed the builders' choices.

Capitol Hill Alleys. If you've ever wondered about the smaller houses and unusual structures tucked behind the grander homes, who lived there and how they made their living, this is the tour for you. Learn about the rich history of the residential and commercial uses that have flourished in our hidden alleys and charming one-block streets.

Visit: chrs.org/guided-walking-tours-november-2021 for details and a link to the Eventbrite reservation system. Tickets are limited, so, if you'd like to attend (and the organizers hope you do!), make your plans early.

For members only... If you'd like to come but Eventbrite isn't working for you, contact Elizabeth Nelson at HouseTourCHRS@gmail.com. ★



IMAGES COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Undine Nash presents the Alleys tour outside her home on Cluss Court; the Architecture tour was a real crowd-pleaser; Mike Canning leads the Hollywood tour at the Library of Congress; outside the Lindbergh home on the Notable People Tour.

November Preservation Café: The New Deal in DC

By Christine Mullins

FDR's New Deal transformed the nation's capital in one short decade, 1933–42. It added a host of major federal buildings; renovated the National Mall and its monuments; developed the capital parks system; and added recreation facilities in small parks.

The New Deal upgraded the sewage system to clean up the Potomac River. It added major bridges and improved miles of city streets. It paid for public schools and hospitals while building Washington's first public housing. New Deal art programs enhanced

the city with magnificent murals and sculptures. Dr. Gray Brechin, the founder of the Living New Deal, has said that "The New Deal's work is largely unmarked and unrecognized. It's like finding a lost civilization that has been buried and forgotten."

At our November Preservation Café, Richard Walker, Professor Emeritus, University of California, Berkeley and Director, Living New Deal, and Brent McKee, Project Historian, Living New Deal will discuss the Living New Deal, a project that has published a large

colorful map of the work of the New Deal in Washington DC.

This map folds to a pocket size and locates more than 500 New Deal sites around the city. The map also describes 35 notable sites on the back. The Living New Deal encourages visitors to use an inset of the National Mall area for walking tours. ★

Our CHRS Preservation Cafés are free to CHRS members and non members. We hope to see you online on November 17 at 6:30 pm. You can access the presentation link at chrs.org.

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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 Committee Report

By Beth Hague

During a meeting held virtually on September 23, 2021, the Committee supported three cases of the six we reviewed and brought one case for consideration by the board, which supported the majority on the Committee in opposition. We await further information on the remaining two cases with later hearing dates. The cases are listed in detail below:

BZA #20502, 921 G Street SE. The Committee voted to support the applicant's request for a special exception lot occupancy requirements to construct a two-story, rear addition to an existing two-story dwelling. We note that the applicants have scaled back the project from a three-story to a two-story project and that the both adjacent neighbors support the request.

BZA #20514, 1226 Duncan Place NE. The Committee voted to oppose the applicant's request for a special exception from rear addition restrictions. We would support the project and the request for special exceptions from lot occupancy and minimum rear requirements if the applicant's request were limited to 10 feet beyond the adjacent neighbor instead of 11.75 feet. We brought the case to the CHRS Board for careful review given neighborhood support

and other factors, and the Board voted to oppose the case.

BZA #20522, 617 A Street NE. The Committee voted to support the applicant's request for a special exception to lot occupancy requirements and from penthouse/rail setback. We note that neighbors support the request and that the applicants have worked with the neighbors in the design of a rail rather than a solid parapet wall for the project. The applicant has told us they will try to discuss the project with owners in the back across the alley as well. We also note that the ANC has requested that the applicants consider having a rail across the entire garage for symmetry.

BZA #20530, 248 10th Street NE. The Committee voted to support the applicant's request for a special exception from rear yard requirements to construct a two-story rear addition to their existing two-story dwelling. We note that the request brings the property in rough line with neighbors to the south, that lot occupancy will be at 60%, and that neighbors support the request. We also note that the ANC has requested that the applicants seek support from their rear neighbor as well and encourage this effort. ★

Membership (not) Garden Party

The weather was not suitable for the hoped-for garden setting for our membership meeting on September 22, but the Hill Center graciously brought the festivities indoors to the lovely Lincoln Room. Members approved the budget as presented by President Beth Purcell, then quickly moved on to food and fellowship. Plenty of cake, coffee, and conversation with people who hadn't seen each other in a long time—or were meeting for the first time. A special evening for all who attended. A few photos are posted at: chrs.org/garden-party.

Historic Preservation vs. Zoning

By Gary Peterson

In these times of Covid, many Capitol Hill residents have decided their house needs more room and have employed a qualified Capitol Hill architect to design a rear addition and maybe a third floor. Once the plans have been finalized the architect informs them that they need “historic preservation approval and zoning relief.” Some may question what appears to be duplicative reviews of the project. This article will attempt to clarify the differences between historic preservation approval and zoning relief.

Historic preservation is overseen by the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) consisting of nine members appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Council. Many of the members of the HPRB are experts in the field or related fields. The Board and the Historic Preservation Office (HPO), acting as staff for the HPRB, are part of the Office of Planning (OP). The activities of the HPRB and HPO are governed by Title 10-C of the DC Municipal Regulations (DCMR).

The HPRB reviews the work done on historic properties to ensure that it is compatible with the Historic District and the building’s historic character. This is first accomplished through the HPO design review of the building plans. It is quite simple; you need historic preservation review for work affecting the exterior appearance of a historic property. Major work on a historic property must be evaluated by the HPRB and minor work qualifies for expedited review by the HPO. Adding a third floor and rear addition is an example of major work and installing new windows and a handrail on the front steps can be considered minor work.

The Zoning Commission (ZC) is very different in organization.

When Congress passed the Home Rule Act it created a body that is independent from the Mayor and City Council and, in theory, free from politics. Three members of the ZC are residents of the District of Columbia appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Council. The fourth member of the ZC is the Architect of the Capitol (or his representative). The fifth ZC member is the Director of the National Park Service (or her representative). The ZC is responsible for adopting the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map and ensuring that they are not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Much of the day-to-day administration of the regulations is delegated to the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA).

The BZA grants relief from the strict application of the Zoning Regulations (variances), approves certain uses of land (special exceptions which are specified in the regulations), and hears appeals of actions taken by the Zoning Administrator at DCRA (this article will not cover the duties of the Zoning Administrator). The Board’s five members consist of three Mayoral appointees, a rotating member of the District of Columbia Zoning Commission, and a designated representative of the National Capital Planning Commission.

The purpose of the zoning regulations is to provide adequate light and air and to control the density and use of development. On Capitol Hill we have two major zoning categories: The Residential Flat (RF) and Mixed-Use (MU) zones. The RF-1 zone is developed with row dwellings that may have up to two dwelling units on the property. The MU zone is what we think of as

Thank You, CHRS Supporters!

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

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Capitol Hill Coalition for Sensible Development
Fredda Sparks, in memory of Tim Burr

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SILVER

Mike Hardiman and
May Al-Najjar
Richard and Chellie Hamecs

our commercial districts and may be improved with a mix of commercial, office and residential. The 2016 Zoning Regulations are found in Title 11 of the DCMR. They are current through August 2021.

Finally, let’s look at the example of the addition proposed in the first paragraph. The HPO and maybe the HPRB will review the plans to make sure the addition is compatible with the historic district. In this case the focus will be on the third floor and its visibility from public space and the look and feel of the rear addition. For instance, is a dogleg being filled in? Zoning is going to be concerned with lot occupancy (60% as matter of right and up to 70% with a special exception), height (not to exceed 35 feet), and rear yard (20 feet, requires a special exception for any less). The third floor also may require a special exception to remove the cornice.

As we all know, the devil is in the details. Next month, we will review RF zoning and in future months, HPRB review. ★

Capitol Hill History Lecture: Following the Trail of John Burroughs

By Nancy Metzger

After a hiatus of more than a year, the Capitol Hill History lecture series, sponsored by the Capitol Hill Community Foundation, will resume on October 25, 7:30 pm, with a presentation on John Burroughs, an eminent naturalist and nature writer in the decades after the Civil War. He lived for a time on Capitol Hill where the Russell Office Building now stands. His observations during hikes about the city and out in the nearby woods, sometimes accompanied by Walt Whitman, became the basis for popular nature essays that were gathered into books such as *Wake-Robin* and later *Riverby*, along with many others.

Steve Dryden, executive director of the Friends of Peirce Mill, will

trace Burroughs's life in DC, his discoveries of Washington's natural delights, and his growing national popularity. Since Peirce Mill on Rock Creek is located within the area that Burroughs often explored, Mr. Dryden has studied not only Burroughs's world through his books but also the on-the-ground changes that resulted during more recent decades, particularly as streams and waterways were lost to view.

On Monday evening, October 25, at 7:30 pm, at Hill Center, 921 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, Steve Dryden will share John Burroughs's Washington in an illustrated presentation. As always, admission is free but a reservation is required

due to limited seating; masks must be worn in Hill Center and proof of full vaccination will be required. After October 1, register at: hillcenterdc.org/event/overbeck-lecture-following-the-trail-of-john-burroughs, or call (202) 549-4172.

All guests should arrive at least 20 minutes prior to the event. Seating will begin at 7 pm for those who hold reservations. Available seats will be released to guests on the waitlist beginning at 7:15 pm. If you hold a reservation and find that you cannot attend, please contact the organizers OverbeckLecture@CapitolHillHistory.org, so that others might use your unclaimed seats. ★

October Preservation Café: Meet our Arborists

By Christine Mullins

How do you file a tree planting request with the DC Department of Transportation (DDOT)? What should you look for when choosing a tree for your own yard? How much water will your new tree need? How can you tell if a tree is struggling (and what to do about it)? What regulations govern the care of trees in public space? How can you help protect this important resource?

Steve McKindley-Ward and Alex Grieve, Ward 6 Arborists from the Urban Forestry Administration (UFA) in DDOT, will be the featured speakers at a virtual Preservation Café, Wednesday, October 20 at 6:30 pm. They will offer general tree advice and share their ideas and experiences

taking care of the trees in our living, growing Capitol Hill canopy.

Our area has many layers of foliage: it is home to stately trees on the U.S. Capitol grounds, the Library of Congress, the U.S. Supreme Court, our local parks (Folger, Garfield, Lincoln, Marion, and Stanton), myriad large and small pocket parks, and the many trees that grace our homes and streets. Caregivers include the Architect of the Capitol, the National Park Service, the UFA, Trees for Capitol Hill, our public and private schools, houses of worship, businesses, home and apartment owners, and a cadre of neighborhood volunteers who plant trees and carry buckets of water to refresh our trees

during our long, hot summers. Learn about the history of our tree canopy and what you can do to help keep our streets green, shady, and healthy!

Have questions of your own?

Alex and Steve are eager to take your questions and have asked that we solicit some in advance, so that they can have answers researched and ready. Visit chrs.org/meet-our-arborists to access a survey form or send an email message to CHRS420@gmail.com with "Questions for Arborists" in the subject line. Instructions for joining WebEx will be posted shortly before the event. ★



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.

OCTOBER

20 Wednesday, 6:30 pm
Preservation Café: Ward 6 Arborists. A WebEx link and call in number will be posted prior to the meeting. Details: chrs.org/meet-our-arborists.

30 Saturday, 10 am–4 pm
The CHRS House Expo at the Eastern Market North Hall, featuring a wide variety of home service exhibitors. Details: chrs.org/house-expo-2021.

NOVEMBER

13–14 Saturday–Sunday
Guided Walking Tours. We are pleased to offer two fan-favorites from the Mother’s Day Tour of Tours—plus two tours, as requested by attendees. Reservations are available through Eventbrite. For more information: chrs.org/guided-walking-tours-november-2021.

17 Wednesday, 6:30 pm
Preservation Café: The New Deal in Washington DC. A WebEx link and call in number will be posted prior to the meeting. Details: chrs.org/the-new-deal-in-washington-pc.

FEBRUARY

16 Wednesday, 6:30 pm
Preservation Café: Uncovering the History of the District’s Buried Streams. A WebEx link and call in number will be posted prior to the meeting. Details: chrs.org/buried-streams-pc.

MARCH

16 Wednesday, 6:30 pm
Preservation Café: Arming a Navy—The Naval Gun Factory and Its Local Workforce. A WebEx link and call in number will be posted prior to the meeting. Details: chrs.org/naval-gun-factory-pc.