



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

# NEWS

www.chrs.org

February 2023

## 'The Capitol Hill Home' Photo Contest Returns

By Elizabeth Nelson

Once again, CHRS is sponsoring a photo contest to prepare for the annual Mother's Day House & Garden Tour: We're waiting for you to submit images that exemplify your vision of "The Capitol Hill Home." There's plenty of things in the neighborhood competing for your attention. Can't decide which image you like best? Let us be the judge and send both!

Email your high resolution images (> 1MB), exterior shots only, to [HouseTourCHRS@gmail.com](mailto:HouseTourCHRS@gmail.com); cell phone photos can be texted to (202) 329-7864. Be sure to include your name and address, email address, and the address of the property in the photo. The winner will be awarded two complimentary tickets to the House Tour. If you need inspiration, please visit [chrs.org/photo-contest-2023](http://chrs.org/photo-contest-2023)



IMAGE COURTESY PATRICK SERFASS

Patrick Serfass submitted this photo of the updated Shotgun House in 2022.

for details and links to past winning entries. Entries are due Sunday, March 5, 2023. We're looking forward to this year's crop of photos! ✧

### Spring Walking Tours

We're offering three guided outdoor walking tours on **Saturday, April 1: Our Industrial Past** (industrial and commercial sites, many of which have been repurposed), **Capitol Hill Alleys** (a trip back in time to explore the workaday world of both residential and commercial uses), and **Notable People** (sites associated with many of the historically significant people who have made Capitol Hill their home).

Tickets will be available through Eventbrite beginning February 6. For additional details visit [chrs.org/guided-walking-tours-april-2023](http://chrs.org/guided-walking-tours-april-2023).

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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 December 15, 2022. 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.

**531 12th Street SE**, HPA 23-090, concept/ third-story addition, roofdeck and window well and, expanded basement, alterations to areaway at side to convert from single unit to two units, and adding a curb cut.

This brick corner rowhouse was one of two built by A. Thompson for owner Robert Lusby in 1891. The 12th Street elevation is two stories plus basement, with a square bay in red press brick with a pyramidal bay cap. The G Street elevation is common red brick, American bond coursing, two square bays with

triangular bay caps and a basement entrance. There are entrances on the west and south elevations.

This contributing building has been vacant for several years. Our primary concern with the project was visibility of the third story from 12th Street and G Street. While the applicants did provide additional information, we believed that they failed to establish that the third story addition would not be visible from public space.

The Board found that the project was not compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District because the addition would be visible and the curb cut would violate the Board’s longstanding opposition to curb cuts in rowhouse neighborhoods. (The applicants had stated that obtaining approval from DDOT for the curb cut would be an uphill battle.)

**647 G Street SE**, HPA 23-096, concept/ three-story rear addition, expanded front areaway, and new sub-basement unit, converting house from one unit to five units.



IMAGE COURTESY EBETH PURCELL

**531 12th Street SE.**

This two-story angled bay brick rowhouse with basement was designed by C.E. Webb and built by Hutchinson & Harbin for owner Faust A. Ambrosi in 1908. This is a contributing building.

The applicant plans to expand the building by excavating a new level below the existing basement, renovate the interior, and add a small rear extension. The single family house would be converted into five units: Basement/cellar: unit 1, wheelchair accessible; First floor: units 2 and 3; Second floor: unit 4; Third floor: unit 5. We saw three issues with this case: 1. substantial demolition; 2. an oversize areaway; and 3. damage to historic fabric from the new sub-basement.

**Substantial demolition.** Only the walls, windows, and stairs on the front elevation and the party wall would remain. The roof, side wall and rear wall would be demolished. We agreed with the staff’s recommendation to reduce the extent of interior structural demolition and to retain and reinforce the existing floor framing systems.

*Continued on page 5*

## CHRS Seeks Nominations for Board

The CHRS Elections Committee, chaired by Beth Purcell, is seeking nominations of individuals who wish to be considered for positions for the 2023–2024 CHRS Board of Directors. These positions include President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary, each for one-year terms, and three At-Large Members for two-year terms. Nominations for the 2023–2024 CHRS Board will be announced at the end of April and postcard ballots will be mailed to CHRS members in May.

If you wish to be considered, recommend someone, or find out more about the duties of each position, please contact the CHRS office at (202) 543-0425 or email [info@chrs.org](mailto:info@chrs.org); a member of the Elections Committee will respond. Each nomination must include the position for which the person wants to be considered and their resume. Nominations must be submitted by the end of the day on Friday, March 24, 2023.



## Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS)

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*President* . . . . . Angie Schmidt  
*First Vice President* . . . . . Christine Mullins  
*Second Vice President* . . . . . Tina May  
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*At Large* . . . . . Beth Hague  
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*At Large* . . . . . Gary Peterson  
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*City Planning\** . . . . . Monte Edwards  
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*Historic Preservation\** . . . . . Beth Purcell  
*House Tour* . . . . . Eaton, Krieger & Schmidt  
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*Public Space* . . . . . Steve Kehoe  
*Zoning\** . . . . . Beth Hague

\* Chair is an appointed Board Member

### NEWSLETTER

Angie Schmidt and Kelly Vielmo, Editors

### WEBMASTER

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](mailto: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](http://www.CHRS.org)

# Preservation Café: 150 Years of Eastern Market

**E**astern Market has served as a center of the Capitol Hill neighborhood since it opened on November 12, 1873. The brainchild of Joseph Carroll, it was designed by Adolph Cluss and expanded in 1908. During the early hours of April 30, 2007, Capitol Hill residents woke to the sound of fire sirens and the smell of smoke. In a matter of hours, fire had critically damaged Eastern Market. The day after the blaze, Mayor Adrian Fenty pledged to rebuild the damaged market and restore its historic architectural features.

In contrast to most other markets in the United States, Eastern Market not only remains standing, but it is still used for the purpose it was originally designed for. The Eastern Market building is designated as a National Historic Landmark.

We look forward to welcoming you to Eastern Market's historic North Hall on Thursday, March 30 at 6:30 pm for a special in-person discussion where Robert Pohl, local historian and Washington, DC tour guide, will give a talk about Eastern Market—the building and its history. We hope you can join us. A brief



**TOP:** The exterior of Eastern Market in 1943.  
**BOTTOM:** A view from inside the market, 1983.

CHRS membership meeting will proceed the presentation at 6:15 pm.

This presentation is supported by Eastern Market and the Department of General Services as part of the Eastern Market 150-Year Anniversary Celebration. ★

## The 2023 House & Garden Tour

By Fynnette Eaton, Jackie Krieger and Angie Schmidt

**T**he House and Garden Tour is shaping up and we are looking forward to spring! We are looking for some additional homes and gardens—the tour is going to be in an area stretching from just north of Eastern Market, spreading south and east towards 11th Street SE. If you are interested in being part of

the Tour, you can reach out to us at [chrs2023tour@gmail.com](mailto:chrs2023tour@gmail.com).

And, as always, we will be looking for docents and house captains for the tour, no experience required, all training will be provided. Please block off your calendar for Mother's Day weekend, May 13–14, 2023! ★

# Preservation Café: History of DCPS and the Story Behind Our Schools

By Christine Mullins

On January 17, CHRS members learned about two outstanding Washington institutions that have partnered to bring the history of our DCPS schools to life for our students, teachers, and visitors: the Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives and the Story of Our Schools project.

Kimberly Springle, executive director of Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives for the past 15 years, explained how Sumner Museum continues to document the pivotal moments in Washington, DC public schools (DCPS). She began by sharing the first known images of the Sumner School from 1890 and 1902, and reflecting on the school's 150-year history.

German architect Adolph Cluss designed and built the school (named for trailblazing Senator and abolitionist, Charles Sumner) for African American students in 1872 at 17th and M Streets NW. Capitol Hill residents may recognize Cluss for his design of Eastern Market the following year in 1873.

Springle described how Richard Hurlburt, the museum's founding

director, saved the Charles Sumner school from being demolished when its roof collapsed in the 1970s. Hurlburt threatened to "stand on the rooftop" to protect the building from the wrecking ball and organized a public-private partnership to fund the renovation that continues to exist today.

As part of the agreement, the school assumed the responsibility of serving as the repository of the DCPS historical record as the Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives, chartered in 1986. Springle explained that no other school district in the United States has such a comprehensive archival collection.

The history of DCPS reflects the local politics of the city and is a source of pride for its children and teachers. Thomas Jefferson was a founder of public education in the District in 1804–1805, for White residents who could afford to pay its fees. Private schools existed for African Americans as early as 1807, and public schools were established for African American students in 1863 after slavery was abolished in the District nine months before the Emancipation Proclamation.

## CHRS Mourns Ann Richards, Former House and Garden Tour Committee Chair

By Paul Cromwell

Ann Richards passed away on January 5, 2023, at the age of 74 following a brief illness. She chaired the CHRS House and Garden Tour Committee from 2005 through 2008. Ann continued to contribute to the House Tour for the next six years through her involvement with advertising, ticket sales and house selection. Her warmth and organizational skills were appreciated by the homeowners, house tour volunteers and our guests. She will be missed by many in our community.

## Thank You, CHRS Supporters!

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

### Contributors

*Annual Appeal*

Nicky Cymrot

Betsy Damos & David King

John and Marcia Duncan

Alan & Rebecca Dye

Maria "Mia" E. Grosjean

Jeanne Harrison

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Edward Chapman

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Denny Lane & Naoko Aoki

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James & Bernadette McMahon

Elizabeth Nelson & Nick Alberti

Brian O'Grady

Martha Pope

Elizabeth Purcell

Rob and Angie Schmidt

Josephine Torrente

Susan van den Toorn

Joan Wills

The first secondary high school program in the District was developed in 1870 for African American Students, known as The Preparatory School for Colored Youth. Public high schools were developed for White students in 1876–77 (Central High School).

Schools remained segregated as neighborhood populations shifted. But in May 1954, D.C. public schools were forced to integrate when the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously decided that school segregation by race was unconstitutional in the District of Columbia (*Bolling v. Sharpe*).

Springle shared a timeline of key events in DCPS history and invited CHRS participants to stop by the

museum to research its archives and visit its collection.

Since 2015, Jen Harris, executive director of the Story of Our Schools, has worked closely with Springle and the Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives.

Her project has partnered with student groups at seven DC public schools to help them research the history of their schools and surrounding neighborhoods to create museum-quality exhibits to display in their school lobbies. She said the partners have worked together to document how these schools are community anchors and reflections of the neighborhoods they serve.

The Story of our Schools project has partnered with four schools on Capitol Hill: Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan, Payne Elementary, Eliot-Hine Middle School, and they are currently working with Eastern High School. Harris detailed how her team has worked with teachers and student ambassadors at Payne Elementary School since 2018.

Their research methods have included: hands-on research at local

archives, oral history interviews with longtime residents, field trips to museums, historical walking tours around the neighborhood, and guest speakers.

Here is an example of what they discovered about Payne:

“The original Payne Elementary School was built in 1896 to serve Black students. At that time Washington, DC schools were segregated by race. As the city grew, many of the Black schools became overcrowded and fell into disrepair while nearby White schools were renovated and operated under capacity.”

“In the late 1940s, parents of Payne Elementary students joined other Black parents living east of the Anacostia River to speak out about the deplorable conditions of their aging schools. They led a series of protests, during which they kept their children home from school. Their activism contributed to the historic 1954 court case *Bolling v. Sharpe* that ended D.C. school desegregation.”

During their research, students interviewed several local residents and alumni, including a firefighter

who helped extinguish a fire that destroyed the main school building in 1983. Students met in several annex buildings until the school was completely modernized in 2014.

Working with documents they found at the Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives, the Payne elementary students also created timelines to document Daniel A. Payne, the founder of the school. They even unearthed a letter Frederick Douglass had written about Daniel Payne’s exemplary leadership and accomplishments.

The Story of Our Schools exhibits have prompted additional school projects and conversations. Harris encouraged Capitol Hill residents to get involved in her organization. She remarked that these “personal stories bring history to life.” ★

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*You can access the presentation link at: [chrs.org/story-behind-our-schools-pc](https://chrs.org/story-behind-our-schools-pc). CHRS Preservation Cafés are free to CHRS members and non-members.*

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## Preservation Briefs, continued from page 2

**Board’s guidance on basement entrances and windows.** We agreed with the staff’s assessment that the proposed areaway failed to comply with the Board’s guidance on basement entrances and windows. The areaway would extend six feet into the front yard (the public parking), which is double the 36 inches recommended.

**Damage to historic fabric.** The oversize areaway raised another problem—its nontraditional and dark interior space. The existing basement is a typical Capitol Hill English basement, with two front windows providing natural light with the aid

of narrow light well. But the new sub-basement unit, 10 feet below the floor of the English basement, will be rather dark, with street-side bedroom windows at the bottom, accessible by a ladder.

In contrast, traditional Capitol Hill basement apartments have good natural lighting and are accessible by stairs, not ladders. We believed that very few people would want to live in this non-traditional dark space, and for that reason the Board should not approve this proposed basement unit. Historic fabric must be protected, whether or not damage, such as the proposed basement apartment, would be readily visible from public space.

The Board found that the applicant should comply with areaway requirements and reduce the extent of structural demolition.

On December 15, the Board approved the following cases on the consent calendar:

- **117 12th Street SE**, HPA 22-373, concept/new construction of two-story dwelling on alley. See report and photograph in *CHRS News* December 2022–January 2023.
- **301 Massachusetts Avenue NE**, HPA 23-098, concept/enclosed sidewalk seating area. ★

**Interested in learning more about historic district designation?**  
Contact CHRS at [info@chrs.org](mailto:info@chrs.org).



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 or postponements will be posted as they are known.*

### FEBRUARY

**6 Monday, 6:30 pm**  
Historic Preservation Committee meeting, 420 10th Street SE, first floor conference room. Chair: Beth Purcell, (202) 544-0178.

**15 Wednesday, 6 pm**  
Board meeting, Northeast Library, 330 7th Street NE.

### MARCH

**5 Sunday**  
Photo Contest 2023: "The Capitol Hill Home." Entries are due Sunday, March 5, 2023. Details: [chrs.org/photo-contest-2023](https://chrs.org/photo-contest-2023).

**6 Monday, 6:30 pm**  
Historic Preservation Committee meeting, 420 10th Street SE, first floor conference room. Chair: Beth Purcell, (202) 544-0178.

**15 Wednesday, 6 pm**  
Board meeting, Northeast Library, 330 7th Street NE.

**16 Thursday, 7:30 pm**  
Zoning Committee Meeting, Kirby House, 420 10th Street SE. Co-Chairs: Beth Hague, (202) 714-9523, and Nick Alberti.

**30 Thursday, 6:30 pm**  
Preservation Café: "Celebrating Eastern Market for 150 Years" with Robert Pohl, local historian, author, and tour guide. In-person in the Eastern Market North Hall. Presentation will be preceded by a brief Membership Meeting. Details: [chrs.org/eastern-market-150yrs-pc](https://chrs.org/eastern-market-150yrs-pc).

**The 2023 Mothers Day House & Garden Tour** will be held Saturday, May 13 & Sunday, May 14. Details: [chrs.org/mothers-day-house-garden-tour](https://chrs.org/mothers-day-house-garden-tour).



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

### APRIL

**1 Saturday**  
Guided outdoor walking tours. Tickets available through Eventbrite on February 6. Details: [chrs.org/guided-walking-tours-april-2023](https://chrs.org/guided-walking-tours-april-2023).

**3 Monday, 6:30 pm**  
Historic Preservation Committee meeting, 420 10th Street SE, first floor conference room. The Chair is Beth Purcell, 544-0178.

**19 Wednesday, 6 pm**  
Board meeting, Northeast Library, 330 7th Street NE.

**20 Thursday, 7:30 pm**  
Zoning Committee Meeting, Kirby House, 420 10th Street SE. Co-Chairs: Beth Hague, (202) 714-9523, and Nick Alberti.