



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

NEWS

www.chrs.org

June 2023

Our Water and Sewage Infrastructure is All Around Us

By Christine Mullins

When conducting research for a CHRS walking tour in 2021, Joanna Kendig was intrigued by the mysterious lines she discovered on the 1887 Hopkins map of Capitol Hill. She learned they identified the water and sewer lines that criss-crossed the city. During the CHRS Preservation Cafe on May 16, Kendig shared what she found as she delved further into these maps to discover how our water and sewage infrastructure has affected the lives of DC’s population.

When Pierre Charles L’Enfant drew his famous plan for Washington in 1791, most of the city was parkland, woodland and farms. By 1800, the population was only 8,144. District residents drew their water from the city’s local springs, streams, and wells, and in most houses their toilet “system” was simply an outdoor privy in the backyard. The development of a comprehensive water and sewage system would

parallel the growth of the city which accelerated during the 1900s.

During the 19th century, those who lived in row houses relied on three local streams for their water: the City Spring, Caffery’s Spring (or the Hotel Spring) and Smith Spring (now the McMillan Reservoir). Many residents relied on wells which operated for years. Water was conveyed through hollowed-out pine logs to street pumps and most people carried water to their homes (or those in which they worked) in large buckets.

Indoor plumbing was only available to privileged residents, such as to the President in the White House. During the John Adams administration (1797–1801), plumbing in the White House was an iron pump attached to a nearby well. Thomas Jefferson (1801–1805) authorized the construction of a cistern in the attic—to distribute

water to two water closets. In 1805, Andrew Jackson had pipes installed to carry water down a corridor to service a bathing room in the East Wing. By 1853, the second floor of the White House finally had central plumbing with hot and cold water taps and a large water tank built in the attic in 1876.

Meanwhile, in 1810 the city constructed the first system of sewer lines to drain storm and ground water from the streets. Any raw

Continued page 5

Election for 2023–2024 Board of Directors

Please make sure to return your ballot to CHRS by June 5 so that it can be counted!! Contact caphrs420@gmail.com if you have not received yours by June 2.

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Overbeck Lecture: “The Last Lincoln Conspirator”

By Nancy Metzger

The assassination of President Abraham Lincoln at Ford’s Theater on the evening of April 14, 1865, is a well-known and pivotal event in American history. What may be less well known is the local character of part of the story and the fate of John Surratt, the last Lincoln conspirator.

On Monday evening, June 5, 2023, writer and historian Andrew Jampoler will explore the Civil War and the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln as well as the connections between the city of Washington and the Lincoln conspirators up to their urgent

flight through the Capitol Hill neighborhood and across the Eastern Branch (now Anacostia River). The escape of the last Lincoln conspirator touched off a world-wide manhunt.

Jampoler is the author of *The Last Lincoln Conspirator: John Surratt’s Flight from the Gallows* as well as other books on American history.

As always, admission to the lecture is free, however a reservation is required due to limited seating. Reserve via hillcenterdc.org/event/overbeck-lecture-june-5, or by calling Hill Center at (202) 549-4172.

Please note that we suggest all guests arrive at least 15 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 are unable to attend, please notify Hill Center so that another person can attend the lecture. ★

Mystery Prints: Free to a Good Home!

By Angie Schmidt

We normally do not advertise items in the newsletter, but we are still working on cleaning up our office space. We have repatriated some of the large-scale prints with people either related to the people in the photos, like the Hais family, or people who currently live in the residences depicted.

These are our last three prints, which aren’t as easy to place—we can tell they are of Washington in the past, but beyond that, they are mysteries. They are approximately 3 feet tall and 4 feet wide. If you would like to claim one to decorate your home, office or business, please email us at caphrs420@gmail.com with your contact information and which one you would like. We will deliver to any location in zip codes 20001, 20002, or 20003! ★



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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 Briefs

By Nick Alberti

On May 3, 2023, seven members of the CHRS Zoning Committee met in person to discuss three cases. Representatives from all the cases participated to present their proposals and the Committee voted to support all three cases.

BZA #20905, 706 15th Street SE.

The Committee voted to **support** the applicant's request for special exceptions for lot occupancy requirements and for rear yard requirements to construct a rear deck addition to an existing, attached, two-story with cellar principal dwelling in the RF-1 Zone.

The applicants are proposing to replace an existing rear yard deck with stairs with a new deck with stairs to include a storage shed below the deck. The proposal will increase lot occupancy from 61.6% to 68.9%. While the rear yard will be reduced from 23'4" to 16'4", the committee notes that the angle of the backyard creates challenges to meeting rear yard requirements and that the proposal reasonably addresses those challenges. There are three letters of support from adjacent neighbors and the BZA hearing is currently scheduled for June 7, 2023.

BZA #20907, 424 10th Street NE.

The Committee voted to **support** the applicant's request for a special exception for lot occupancy requirements to construct a two-story rear addition to an existing, attached, two-story with cellar principal dwelling unit in the FR-1 zone. The proposal will replace an existing, rear yard porch with a new, screened porch and bedroom addition above. It will increase lot occupancy from 64% to 69%. The proposal appears to have minimal impact on neighbors;

there are three letters of support and no letters of opposition. Window replacements have been approved by DCRA. The BZA hearing is scheduled for June 14, 2023.

BZA #20911, 1112 8th Street NE.

The committee voted to **support** the applicant's request for a special exception for the building height requirements to construct a third story addition to an existing attached, two-story with cellar flat in the RF-1 zone. This proposal will expand an existing roof deck with an enclosed porch and add a wooden open-roof pergola with a retractable awning. The enclosed porch will be in-line with an existing stair pop up. The proposal will increase building height to 38', which is above the building height criteria of 35' (though which may be requested up to 40' in this zone).

The committee notes that the proposal appears to be thoughtfully designed, and that the addition will be minimally visible from the street (set back 27' from the front of the house) as well as adjacent to a building with a significantly higher wall. The proposal was unanimously approved by the ANC6A zoning committee. The BZA hearing is scheduled for June 14, 2023. ★

Historic Preservation Briefs

By Beth Purcell

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB or the Board), considered the following cases at its virtual hearing on April 27, 2023. 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.

On April 27, the Board approved the following cases on the consent calendar:

647 G Street SE, HPA 23-096, concept/rear addition; cellar addition; areaway. The applicant submitted plans meeting the Board’s requirements. For prior coverage, please see *CHRS News* February, April, and May 2023.

1236 Walter Street SE, HPA 23-253, concept/two story rear addition. ★



1236 Walter Street SE.

IMAGE COURTESY BETH PURCELL

Interested in learning more about historic district designation?

Contact CHRS at info@chrs.org.

Reporting Illegal Construction: If You See Something, Say Something

We often receive questions about construction projects in our neighborhood and we try to steer people to the right authorities. CHRS does not have the ability to stop construction—our zoning and historic preservation committees weigh in with opinions and guidance on the projects to the DC authorities, but once the permit is approved, it is out of our hands. The following guidelines can help you get to the right place:

Department of Buildings (formerly DCRA) regulates construction in the District. DOB’s website (dob.dc.gov) states that generally, the following are types of work require building permits: new construction; additions; demolition; construction of retaining walls, decks, fences, sheds, garages, and vaults; erection of signs and awnings.

Any construction in the District of Columbia without required building permits is illegal. Illegal construction is a public danger; it can hurt people and property. If you see illegal construction activity in the District of Columbia, please report it by submitting an Illegal Construction Request through: dob.dc.gov/node/1616601 or call 311. Give the address and describe the illegal construction, and DOB will schedule an inspection to investigate.

Work in public space is regulated by DDOT. For the definition of public space, see DDOT’s *Public Realm Design Manual* on ddot.dc.gov. Public space includes all the publicly-owned property between the property lines on a street, park, or other public property, as such property lines are shown on the records of the District, and includes any roadway, tree space, sidewalk, or parking between such property lines.

Public Parking Area. “Public Parking” means that area of public space devoted to open space, greenery, parks, or parking that lies between the property line, which may or may not coincide with the building restriction line, and the edge of the actual or planned sidewalk that is nearer to the property line, as the property line and sidewalk are shown on the records of the District. This area often includes spaces that appear to be front yards with private landscaping that create park-like settings on residential streets. A public space permit is needed for the following:

- Dumpsters in public space
- Sidewalk construction and repair
- Flag poles, planter boxes, retaining walls and fences in public space.

sewage that got into these lines went straight into the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers since there were no treatment plants. Men, primarily enslaved African Americans and immigrants, regularly collected “night waste” from the houses, privies, and pit latrines via horse-drawn carts. This once-thriving business delivered the waste to country farms to use as fertilizer or to dispose of in the local waterways.

In 1853, the U.S. Corp of Engineers began constructing a dam at Great Falls that would hold and deliver water to Dalecarlia Reservoir, and fill the Georgetown and McMillan Reservoirs using a series of pumping stations. This system began working in 1864 and was completed in 1902.

Kendig said it was difficult to pinpoint exactly when these systems were first installed. She discovered that engineers needed to purchase a permit to open streets to introduce water and gas lines during the construction process by 1874. Sewer lines—which connected some houses—divulged their waste directly into the creeks and rivers.

Kendig shared several detailed maps from the Board of Public Works, such as one from 1888 that showed the locations for water mains above six inches, smaller lines, ornamental fountains, drinking for horses, public pumps, public hydrants, stop valves, and fire plugs. Kendig noted that few areas of the city were paved at this time.

She found evidence of “lateral” lines in 1887, but found a notice for a plumbing regulation from the Engineer Commissioner dated July 30, 1896, that required residents to obtain a permit to connect a portable water closet or privy with a manhole, basin, or trap lateral.

Kendig shared a schedule of water charges to service an “ideal bathroom” as of July 1897. For example, the

water bill for a two-story, 18-foot wide house was \$4 per year. Manufacturing establishments, such as hotels and livery stables, were charged a meter rate of \$.03 per 1,000 gallons. However, many areas lacked water and sewer services, even by the 1930s.

Kendig shared photos of the McMillan Reservoir sand filtration site which was completed in 1902 and deemed a national historic landmark nearly 90 years later in 1991. The reservoir is still in use but the rapid sand filtration system, which incorporated an extensive system of underground chambers to clean the water, was decommissioned in 1986 in favor of more advanced filtration methods. The area became a public park during World War II. The McMillan site is currently at risk since Mayor Bowser announced a controversial plan to develop this site into residential, retail, office, and hotel space in September 2022.

In 1937 the city built a sewage and treatment plant on the site of the current Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant to end the unhealthy, unsanitary practice of dumping the raw sewage on the banks of the Potomac and other waterways.

Kendig said we have made great strides in treating our combined sewer overflows and have come a long way since we dumped our night soil directly on the fields of our local farms. She ended her presentation by showcasing steps many District residents are taking to upgrade our infrastructure using more sustainable, environmentally-friendly options. ★

You can access the presentation link at chrs.org/infrastructure-pc. CHRS Preservation Cafés are free to CHRS members and non-members.

Thank You, CHRS Supporters!

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

Contributors

General Donations

Kate Morrell
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Historic Preservation Officers

House Tour

Trudy & Gary Peterson

Memberships

Individual

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Silver

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Barry & Sandra Harrelson
James & Bernadette McMahon
Kate Morrell
James Sandman &
Elizabeth Mullin

The 2023 House Tour in Photos

By Fynnette Eaton, Jackie Krieger and Angie Schmidt



Well, it wouldn't have been a CHRS House Tour without a little rain but at least it was only on Saturday!



IMAGES COURTESY TANYA SHARMA

But Mother's Day Sunday turned out to be beautiful.



Check in was easy.



Some people enjoyed the architectural tour of the Hill Center . . .

Call to Artists!

By Elizabeth Nelson

During the pandemic in 2021, we were challenged to have a House Tour experience that would be entirely outdoors. We planned a series of guided walking tours but still wanted to incorporate some element of home visits. So we invited Capitol Hill artists and artisans to show their work in their yards or on their porches.

To our delight, it was hugely popular with both visitors and artists. We've since received many requests to do it again, so we are partnering with the Capitol Hill Art League (CHAL) to stage a similar event, Saturday & Sunday, September 9 & 10, 2023. This time, local artists will also have the option of showing their work inside their homes or studios. The event will be



IMAGE COURTESY ELIZABETH NELSON

An improvised outdoor gallery at the 2021 Art at Home event.

free to both visitors and artists—neither CHRS nor CHAL will charge fees or commissions.

Interested in showing your own work? Visit chrs.org/art-walk-2023 to see all the details and

find the registration form. Have an artist friend with a Capitol Hill location? Please forward the information—we would love to include them! ★



... and others just headed straight out to the houses.

Thank You

The House & Garden Tour would not be possible without the generosity of the homeowners, supporters, donors, and our sponsors:

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We thank all of you who attended and hope to see you next year!



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.

JUNE

5 Monday, 6:30 pm
Historic Preservation Committee meeting,
420 10th Street SE, first floor.

5 Monday, 7 pm
Overbeck Lecture: "The Last Lincoln
Conspirator." Hill Center, 921
Pennsylvania Avenue SE. Reserve at:
hillcenterdc.org/event/overbeck-lecture-june-5, or by calling Hill Center at (202)
549-4172.

7 Wednesday, 7 pm
Zoning Committee Meeting, Kirby
House, 420 10th Street SE.

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

JULY

3 Monday, 6:30 pm
Historic Preservation Committee meeting,
420 10th Street SE, first floor.

5 Wednesday, 7 pm
Zoning Committee Meeting,
Kirby House, 420 10th Street SE.

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

AUGUST

2 Wednesday, 7 pm
Zoning Committee Meeting, Kirby
House, 420 10th Street SE.



CHRS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF PRESERVATION

7 Monday, 6:30 pm
Historic Preservation Committee meeting,
420 10th Street SE, first floor.

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

SEPTEMBER

9/10 Saturday/Sunday, 12–5 pm
Art Walk 2023. Details: chrs.org/art-walk-2023.

29 Friday, 7 pm
2023 Dick Wolf Lecture. Speaker:
Professor John Rennie Short, School of
Public Policy, University of Maryland
Baltimore County. Hill Center, 921
Pennsylvania Avenue SE. Details: chrs.org/2023-dick-wolf-lecture.

CHRS 2023 House Expo
Coming October 28! More details
at chrs.org/house-expo-2023.