

DC PRESERVATION ADVOCATE



Summer/Fall
2008

THE MISSION OF THE DC PRESERVATION LEAGUE IS TO PRESERVE, PROTECT, AND ENHANCE THE HISTORIC AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT OF WASHINGTON, DC, THROUGH ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION.

Diverse Program Schedule Planned for Fall

DCPL has a busy fall season in store with several planned programs including walking tours, the Annual Member Meeting, the Mayor's Awards for Historic Preservation, and three new DC Modern events.

Walking Tours

Two walking tours are planned - beginning with **Gallaudet University** on **September 13th** from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Designed by Olmsted and Vaux, the historic campus was specifically designed to offer visual stimulation to students who are hearing impaired. The tour will be presented in sign language with voice translation.

The second tour, **October 4th** from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. is called "**Renewal at Risk**," and will focus on 1950's era

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September 13
Walking Tour of Gallaudet University

September 18
*Annual Member Meeting
Federal American National Bank Building*

October 4
*DC Modern:
Walking Tour of Southwest DC*

October 15
*DC Modern:
DC Inventory of Modern Architecture Presentation
Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library*

November 20
*DC Modern:
Panel Discussion on the Evaluation of Modernist Architecture
Pan American Health Organization Building*

DCPL Announces Most Endangered Places 2008

Stevens Elementary School at 21st & M Streets NW, served as a fitting backdrop for DCPL's announcement of its annual list of Most Endangered Places at a press conference on Tuesday, May 13, 2008. The ten resources selected for this year's list represent a diverse collection of buildings and infrastructure.

Since 1996, with input from members and the community, DCPL has selected resources for inclusion on an annual list of Most Endangered Places. The purpose of the list is to bring attention to buildings and landmarks threatened by neglect, demolition, or inappropriate alterations.

This year's list includes some repeats from previous years but also includes several other new and significant resources facing a variety of different threats. In the months ahead,



DC Public School Buildings: Pictured above is Stevens Elementary School at 21st & M Streets NW. The 140-year-old building was the first school in DC built for freed slaves after the Civil War. It is slated for closure. (DCPL Archives)

DCPL will build programs, create partnerships, monitor legislation and advocate for the preservation of these important representations of DC's rich history.

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President's Letter

Dear Friends of DCPL,

Since taking office as DCPL's President in January 2008, I've seen the organization make a concerted effort to increase programming for the membership and the general public. To that end, DCPL has jointly sponsored programs with the DC Building Industry Association (DCBIA)

on DC's school modernization plans and conducted a "Historic Preservation 101" seminar with the DC Board of Realtors and DC Board of Appraisers. In May, DCPL partnered with the parent's association at the historic Stevens Elementary School to produce the press announcement of the 2008 list of *Most Endangered Places* for Washington, DC. In September, DCPL will be working with the Historic Anacostia Block Association (HABA) on a historic window workshop to provide homeowners with greater understanding of the benefits of restoring their wood windows versus replacement.

As a continuation of our DC Modern programming, DCPL is pleased to announce that the *DC Inventory and Context Study on Modernism* will be presented on October 15th at the Mies van der Rohe's Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library. This cooperative effort with the DC Historic Preservation Office continues the dialogue begun at the January 2006 *DC Modern* symposium and is the first public presentation of the long-awaited building inventory. I hope all of you will look closely at the inventory and provide feedback on buildings that may have been missed so that the associated context can be as complete as possible.

To continue this aggressive schedule of programming and to increase outreach to underserved parts of the city, DCPL depends on the time and energy of an active and involved membership. Consider joining a working committee or contact Rebecca Miller or Erik Hein to discuss your individual interests. There are many tasks to be accomplished and we can only make headway with your assistance.

Best Wishes,

John Bellingham

This program has received Federal financial assistance for the identification, protection, and/or rehabilitation of historic properties and cultural resources in the District of Columbia. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or disability in its Federally assisted programs. If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20240.

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DC Preservation Advocate

is a quarterly publication of the DC Preservation League. DCPL's mission is to preserve, protect, and enhance the historic and built environment of Washington, DC, through advocacy and education. Readers are encouraged to submit information and opinions.

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Legislative Update

Proposed Bill Would Exempt Religious Property

On June 10th, Councilmember Marion Barry introduced a bill (B17-9788) to amend the Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act of 1978 to exempt property owned and used by a religious institution from historic designation where it would “impose a substantial burden.” The amendment would cover any property designated after November 16, 1993. For a full copy of the bill, please visit www.dcpreservation.org/news.htm.

Born of the recent controversial landmark designation of the Third Church of Christ, Scientist, this bill could have serious implications not only for local preservation law, but also on a national scale. DCPL has worked with its legal counsel, McKenna Long & Aldridge LLP, to draft a statement (see box to right) regarding the proposed bill.

The council is not set to debate this bill until September.

Third Church Filed Suit

On August 7, 2008, the Third Church of Christ held a press conference announcing their intention to file a federal lawsuit claiming that the landmark designation of their church building violates their free exercise of religion and is in violation of the Religions Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act.

The church has sold the land the church is built upon and the adjoining office tower to developer ICG who intends to demolish the complex for the construction of a new office building. The church contends that the worship space that will be provided in this new development will be more compatible with their mission.

Sympathetic to cases of economic hardship, public interest or special merit, the DC Historic Preservation Act already includes provisions for such exceptions via the Mayor’s Agent. At press time, however, the Church has not yet completed this process.

Both adored and disdained, the “brutalist” Third Church was designed by Araldo Cassuta of I.M. Pei and Partners. DCPL has placed the complex on its Most Endangered Places list for 2008. (See page 5)

DCPL Statement Regarding Proposed Bill B17-0788 September 8, 2008

District of Columbia Council member Marion Barry recently introduced a sweeping bill that would have the effect of exempting buildings owned by religious institutions from the District’s historic preservation laws. Under the bill, a religious institution could prevent such a building from being designated as a historic landmark merely by **stating** that the designation would substantially burden its exercise of religion. That statement would not be subject to review. Additionally, the bill contains a retroactive provision which would make buildings that were landmarked as long ago as 1993 eligible for exemption.

The bill’s stated purpose is to “conform” the DC Historic Preservation Act (HPA) to federal laws that restrict government entities from imposing substantial burdens upon the free exercise of religion through certain regulatory actions. But the federal laws in question do not prohibit government entities from regulating property owned by religious institutions. Rather, where applicable, they require only that any such regulation not impose substantial burdens on the free exercise of religion. Nothing in the DC HPA discriminates against religious institutions or inherently imposes such burdens. Further, the alteration or demolition restrictions that may result from a building’s historic designation vastly differ from the type of coercive government actions that are usually associated with judicial findings of substantial burdens upon religious exercise.

Like many similar state and local laws across the country, the DC HPA requires a property owner to obtain a historic preservation review before altering or demolishing a historic landmark. But the DC HPA **permits** alterations or demolitions that are necessary in the public interest, either to advance historic preservation purposes or to construct a project of special merit. The DC HPA also allows alterations or demolitions that are necessary to avoid an unreasonable economic hardship upon the owner. Like any other property owner, a religious institution is free to make any of these showings. Yet the Barry bill would allow a religious institution to exempt its property from any historic preservation review — solely on its own say-so — regardless of the significance of the historic landmark in question and without any balancing of competing interests.

Aside from being unnecessary and ill-advised, the proposed bill is of questionable legality because of its tension with the Establishment Clause of the Constitution. The Establishment Clause requires religious neutrality on the part of the government and prohibits government favoritism of religious institutions. The proposed bill defies the Establishment Clause by permitting exemptions based upon unsubstantiated and self-interested statements made by any religious institution, but no other type of institution or entity.

The DC HPA does not offend religious freedom in any way. The proposed bill needlessly undermines a long-established historic preservation review system and unwisely entangles the District government in the establishment of religion.

Joseph Taylor Arms Mansion

(Chancery Building of the Democratic Republic of the Congo)



Joseph Taylor Arms Mansion: Located at 1800 New Hampshire Avenue, the vacant mansion is owned by the Democratic Republic of the Congo. (DCPL Archives)

Designed in 1908 by the architectural firm of Hornblower & Marshall as the residence for John Taylor Arms, the elegant baroque house at the corner of New Hampshire and S Street NW, now stands vacant and deteriorating as a classic example of demolition-by-neglect.

Although Arms was a renowned figure in banking and financial circles in the 19th and early 20th centuries, Hornblower & Marshall were leaders in the American Institute of Architects and designed more than 100 major commissions including the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History and the Duncan Phillips Mansion (now home to the Phillips Collection).

Owned by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the building was formerly used as their Chancery Building until its condition prompted them to lease space elsewhere in Washington.



St. Elizabeths Hospital, West Campus, 2700 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE. Pictured is the original "Center Building," designed by Thomas U. Walter in 1852. (DCPL Archives)

St. Elizabeths Hospital, West Campus

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979, designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1990, and placed on the DC Inventory of Historic Places in 2005, St. Elizabeths continues to be threatened by the Department of Homeland Security's proposal to develop the vacant property for use as their consolidated headquarters.

Located on more than 176 acres overlooking the confluence of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, the site was chosen by Dorothea Dix and the first building was designed by Architect of the Capitol, Thomas U. Walter, in 1852.

DCPL will continue to participate in the planning process for this site and will encourage a re-use program sensitive to this important site.



Walter Reed, 6900 Georgia Avenue NW: Pictured is the main hospital building. (DCPL Archives)

Walter Reed Medical Center

Named for Major Walter Reed (1851-1902), the hospital opened its doors on May 1, 1909 to ten patients. Today the 110-acre campus serves 16,000 patients each year and houses the National Museum of Health and Medicine.

Several noteworthy buildings in the Georgian Revival and other styles have housed a number of distinguished Americans including soldiers, generals and presidents. Identified for closure in 2005 through the Base Realignment and Closure initiative, the future of the site remains unclear. DCPL will continue to monitor the situation and is exploring a nomination to the DC Inventory of Historic Sites.



Barney Circle Neighborhood: Bounded by Potomac Avenue SE, 17th Street SE, Kentucky Avenue SE and Pennsylvania Avenue SE. Pictured is 827-833 Kentucky Avenue SE. (DCPL Archives)

Barney Circle Neighborhood

Located to the east of the Capitol Hill Historic District in southeast DC, Barney Circle is a residential neighborhood that was developed to provide affordable housing to the influx of new residents coming to DC to work for the war effort during World War I. Characterized by uninterrupted rows of horizontally oriented brick rowhouses with front porches, the homes also feature details such as overhanging eaves, mansard roofs and dormers.

The fabric and character of the neighborhood is largely intact, however, demolitions and third-story additions are a growing threat to this cohesive community.

Third Church of Christ, Scientist

The award-winning Third Church of Christ, Scientist was designed by Araldo Cassutta in 1971, while he was a partner at I.M. Pei & Partners. Both hailed and criticized throughout the years for its bold “brutalist” expression, the Historic Preservation Review Board voted to add the complex to the DC Inventory of Historic Sites in the spring of 2008.



Third Church of Christ, Scientist: 900 16th Street NW. (DCPL Archives)

Despite its designation, the office building and land has been purchased by a developer who wishes to demolish the complex and construct an office tower with a small space for the congregation. For more information about DCPL’s position on the Third Church, see our web site at www.dcpreservation.org.



Judiciary Square Clusters: The 300 block of E Street exemplifies the few remaining clusters of buildings from the mid nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (DCPL Archives)

Judiciary Square Clusters

Before the major expansion of the federal government that took place in the early to mid twentieth century, the eastern part of downtown Washington now known as Judiciary Square was a living neighborhood of residences, businesses and churches. With few remaining “clusters” of buildings, some dating to the 1850’s, the last remnants of this neighborhood’s history are in danger of extinction.

DCPL is preparing landmark nominations for several buildings in this neighborhood and will continue to advocate for their preservation.

Historic DC Public School Buildings

Symbolizing well over one hundred years of education and community history, DC Public School Buildings also represent a variety of architectural styles from Elizabethan Revival to Modernist. Of the 165 public school buildings in DC, 86 have been deemed eligible for listing on the DC Inventory of Historic Sites. However, only 21 have been designated as landmarks.

Years of neglect combined with scheduled closures and new plans for aggressive rehabilitation have created an atmosphere that may threaten many historic school buildings in the future.



Barry Farm Frame Houses

Only three frame houses remain to represent the original Barry Farm neighborhood which developed east of the Anacostia River in the mid-nineteenth century. Barry Farm, located on land between St. Elizabeths Hospital and Uniontown, was planned as part of an initiative after the Civil War to provide homes for former slaves.

Barry Farm Frame Houses: Only three of the original Barry Farm houses remain on the 2700-2800 block of Wade Road SE. Pictured is 2700 Barry Road SE. (DCPL Archives)

DCPL will work with the community to encourage the city to protect these historic resources and other clusters of historic frame houses located east of the Anacostia River as further redevelopment plans are entertained for the area.

Foundry Branch Trolley Trestle

One of only two remaining bridges along the former trolley line linking Glen Echo and Georgetown, the Foundry Branch Trolley Trestle is one of the few remaining early transport bridges in the city. The line, originally constructed around 1900, was shut down in the 1960's.

Rusted and severely deteriorated, the bridge stands with the help of improvised cables. DCPL supports the repair and reuse of the trestle as an important resource to the DC park system.



Foundry Branch Trolley Trestle: Crossing Foundry Branch in Glover Archibald Park. (DCPL Archives)

**Are You A Member?
Has Your Membership
Expired?**

Visit www.dcpreservation.org or call the office at 202.783.5144 today. Your DCPL Membership ensures a bright future for our built environment.

**Interested in
Volunteering?**

DC Preservation League is always looking for new volunteers. For more information, contact Erik Hein at erik@dcpreservation.org or at 202.783.5144.

Georgetown Streetcar Tracks

For nearly a century, District residents traveled the city by one of the most remarkable streetcar systems in the world. What made this system so remarkable is that its underground conduit design enabled the system to run without overhead wires - a requirement mandated by Congress. Only a handful of cities utilized similar systems worldwide.

Today, aside from a small stretch of track in London, the streetcar tracks in Georgetown are the last remaining examples of this type of system. Failure to maintain the paving system around the tracks has raised safety concerns with some advocating for their removal. DCPL will help educate the public about the historic significance of these remaining streetcar tracks.



Georgetown Streetcar Tracks: Located on O and P Streets NW, west of Wisconsin Ave. NW, Georgetown. (DCPL Archives)

...Continued from page one

DCPL Announces Busy Program Season

redevelopment of Southwest DC. Offered as a part of our DC Modern program and held on DOCOMOMO's day of nationwide modernist walking tours, the tour will highlight the controversial "model" modernist urban renewal project that resulted in the wholesale clearing of the former neighborhood. Today, the open spaces and buildings championed by this movement are themselves threatened by redevelopment.

The cost for each tour is \$10 for DCPL members and \$20 for nonmembers. To make reservations (required as space is limited), please call the office at 202.783.5144 or email rsvp@dcpreservation.org complete contact information (name, address, phone number). To learn more about DOCOMOMO, visit www.docomomo-us.org.

Annual Meeting

The Federal American National Bank Building (future home of the Armenian Genocide Museum of America) is the location of the **DCPL Annual Member Meeting** on **Thursday, September 18th**, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Refreshments will be served. The event is free for DCPL members and \$50 for nonmembers (includes membership). To make reservations (required by September 15), please call the office at 202.783.5144 or email rsvp@dcpreservation.org complete contact information (name, address, phone number).

DC Modern

In addition to the "Renewal at Risk" walking tour of Southwest DC, DCPL is presenting two additional programs as a part of the DC Modern initiative focusing on mid-century modernist architecture. From 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., **Thursday, October 15th** in the lobby of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, 901 G Street NW, will be a **presentation** on the results of the long-awaited inventory of DC's modernist buildings conducted by Robinson & Associates. Reservations are not necessary.

Save the Date!!! From 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on **Thursday, November 20th** at the Pan American Health Organization building at 525 23rd Street NW, DCPL will present a **Panel Discussion** on the evaluation of modernist buildings for preservation. Many members have commented that although they are comfortable with the salient characteristics of



Above: The Federal-American National Bank (the future home of the Armenian Genocide Museum of America), built in 1925-26, was designed by nationally prominent bank and skyscraper architect Alfred C. Bossom in association with distinguished Washington architect Jules Henri De Sibour, the city's leading practitioner of the Beaux-Arts style. The building's design incorporates a number of innovative interior and exterior features, most notably the elevated two-story banking hall, which is one of only twelve landmarked interiors in the city.

Victorian, colonial or even Art Deco buildings that make them worthy of preservation, some have trouble deciding what makes certain modernist buildings "better" than others. More details will be announced later.

More To Come

Look for the announcement of several other programs including this year's Mayor's Awards for Historic Preservation ceremony and for a workshop on historic wood windows designed to spotlight repair techniques and ways to increase energy efficiency.

Historic Preservation 101

Approximately 150 individuals consisting of members of the DC Board of Real Estate, the DC Board of Appraisers, DCPL Members and the public registered for "Historic Preservation 101," on May 30, 2008. The program was presented by DCPL at the Kellogg Conference Center of Gallaudet University.

Designed as an introductory program providing an overview of neighborhood development in DC, the well-received program covered historic designation procedures and laws and financial incentives for preservation. The program featured local historian Brian Kraft, DC Historic Preservation Office staff members Timothy Denee and Brendan Meyer, and Carol Goldman, executive director of the L'Enfant Trust.

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