

DC PRESERVATION ADVOCATE



Summer 2007

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.

DCPL Announces Washington's Most Endangered Places for 2007

On May 31st, DCPL's executive director **Rebecca Miller** announced the 2007 list of Washington's Most Endangered Places. The media announcement, attended by more than 40 ANC Commissioners, community leaders, friends of preservation and media, took place outside the Gralyn Hotel at 1745 N Street, NW, a site included on the 2007 list.

Jacqueline Pierce, President of the **General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC)**, which has had its headquarters on N Street since 1922, spoke about the significance of the block in the history of the organization.



See page 3 for more information on the Washington's Most Endangered Places for 2007!



Sabrina Baron, President of Historic Takoma Inc. and Loretta Neumann, Vice President of DCPL and President of the Takoma Theatre Conservancy at the MEP event. Photos by Jackie Corbett.

Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library the newest DC Landmark

At its June 26th hearing, the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB), voted unanimously to list Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's 1972 International Style building on the DC Inventory of Historic Sites and forward the nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.



The nomination, prepared by **Kim Williams**, the National Register coordinator for the **DC Historic Preservation Office**, was co-sponsored by HPO, the **Committee of 100 on the Federal City** and the **DC Preservation League**. **Rebecca Miller**, DCPL's executive director, gave a presentation on the building's significance. DC Public Library director **Ginnie Cooper** testified in support of the landmark nomination, which included portions of the interior.

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe was born in Aachen, Germany in 1886. He initially worked as a draftsman specializing in furniture design and rendering. Although he did not have any academic architectural training, Mies' talent became apparent while working with progressive German architect Peter Behrens. Mies opened his own office in 1914 and soon achieved international recognition as one of the leading figures of modern architecture with buildings such as the German pavilion for the Barcelona exposition in 1929.

continued on page 6

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

On May 31, DCPL announced its 2007 list of Most Endangered Places. Whereas the 2006 list focused on the League's ongoing strategic themes of *Preserving Public Campuses* (St. Elizabeths, McMillan Reservoir, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Armed Forces Retirement Home) and *DC Modern* (Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library), the 2007 list represents a "return to the neighborhood." This year we celebrate the Carroll Laundry Smokestack, a structure that is a neighborhood landmark in the truest sense of the word, as well as historic theatres that for decades have served as defining features of their neighborhoods. We also call attention to the traditional row house neighborhoods that characterize the "old Washington" that we all love, and also the mid-century Southwest redevelopment area that, although controversial when built 50 years ago, has since become a beloved home to residents of that neighborhood.

The 2007 Most Endangered list thus includes sites that individually may be significant to local neighborhoods, but that collectively are as important to the city as a whole as the large-tract, public properties highlighted on the 2006 list. This dual focus is appropriate for DCPL, as the main preservation organization in Washington. We continue to lead preservation efforts that are primarily city-wide, while lending our support and assistance as needed to neighborhood preservation groups.

The Eastern Market and Georgetown Public Library, both victims of recent same-day fires, reflect the intersection of neighborhood and city. Eastern Market is the last of what used to be a series of public markets throughout the District; today it is not only a defining feature of Capitol Hill, but it is also enjoyed and cherished by shoppers and diners from all over the District. As a place, the library is important primarily to the residents of Georgetown; as an historic resource, it is invaluable to all District citizens.

DCPL is thus committed to working with the District government, neighborhood preservation groups and others to restore and preserve these buildings for the benefit and enjoyment of all Washingtonians. [See page 7 for how you can help.](#)

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, D.C. 20240.

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Edwin L. Fountain



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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Most Endangered Places for 2007

District of Columbia – City Owned Properties

as represented by **The Franklin School (interior), DC Public School Buildings and 1909-1913 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE**

Nominated By: The DC Preservation League Board of Trustees

DC Preservation League has continued to be frustrated with the stewardship of historic properties owned by the District of Columbia. Although we are pleased with the recent efforts by the City to secure a developer for the Howard Theatre on T Street, NW, and the RFP process for the Old Naval Hospital on Capitol Hill, there are still dozens of city owned buildings that remain vacant and dilapidated. The City lacks a comprehensive list of all of its holdings, and ascertaining which agency is responsible for a specific building is often cumbersome. DCPL has high expectations for private owners of historic properties and it is important that the District Government set a good example for the private sector for the stewardship of the District's historic fabric.

Potomac Annex (Observatory Hill) 23rd and E Streets, NW

Nominated By: The DC Preservation League Board of Trustees

In July 2006, the *Washington Post* reported that the then-Director of National Intelligence (DNI), John D. Negroponte, was attempting to secure the Potomac Annex (Old Naval Observatory) for DNI's headquarters. It has been reported to DCPL that DNI wishes to move forward with plans to develop the site with substantial demolition involved. Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, DNI would be required to accommodate historic preservation concerns with the needs of Federal undertakings through consultation among the agency official and other interested parties. The goal of consultation is to identify historic properties potentially affected by the undertaking, assess its effects, and seek ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse effects on historic properties.



Franklin School Interior Fresco



1909-1913 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE



DC Public School Buildings (Langston School)



Old Naval Observatory

Historic Washington Vistas

As represented by “The Point” at St. Elizabeths Hospital and the west porch of the United States Capitol

Nominated By: The DC Preservation League Board of Trustees and the Committee of 100 on the Federal City

In 1791, Pierre L’Enfant completed his plan for the city of Washington, DC, taking into consideration not only the streets and avenues radiating from the nation’s capital, but also the open space and vistas that contribute to the planned, baroque design for the city. This plan, listed on the DC Inventory of Historic Sites and the National Register of Historic Places, did not foresee the 21st century’s call for overzealous security barriers on the National Mall or walled off compounds for the Department of Homeland Security.



View from the “Point” at St. Elizabeths



View from the West Porch of the United States Capitol



Eckington

Undesignated Historic Row House Neighborhoods

as represented by Columbia Heights, Eckington and Hill East

Nominated By: Barney Circle Neighborhood Watch Association, Capital Hill Restoration Society, Committee of 100 on the Federal City, DCPL Landmarks Committee and ANC Commissioner Will Hill (6B06)

From the city’s inception, Washington’s residential areas have been composed primarily of attached houses. Pierre Charles L’Enfant (1754–1852) envisioned the city as one of specialized neighborhoods where people would live within walking distance of their work. He anticipated that the neighborhoods would be developed as they were in Europe, with attached houses.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the 20th century, Washington became a prosperous city. As reported in the Evening Star in 1897, the elimination of malaria, the appearance of museums and other cultural institutions, the expanding social scene, and the concentration of political power made Washington an attractive place to live. Speculative building of all types increased and as the trolley system expanded, construction of row-house projects along the routes increased exponentially. Most projects were small-scale, usually only a few houses at a time.



“Pop up” in Hill East

Historic Neighborhood Theaters as represented by Sheridan Theater, Strand Theatre, and Takoma Theatre

Nominated By: Brighwood Citizens Association, DCPL Landmarks Committee, and Historic Takoma Inc.

From the 1920s to the 1970s, Washington's historic theaters were centers of community life, hosting live stage performances and motion pictures. Teardowns, demolition-by-neglect, and ill-advised alteration threaten many of Washington's neighborhood theaters.



Takoma Theatre in Takoma Park Historic District



Strand Theatre in Deanwood

Southwest Washington, DC - Urban Renewal Area and Plan

Bound roughly by Independence Avenue on the north, South Capitol on the east, P Street on the south, and 14th Street, SW on the west

Nominated by: Tiber Island Cooperative Homes, Inc.



Aerial rendering of the plan for Capitol Park - Satterlee & Smith Architects

Southwest Washington was one of the earliest and most controversial urban renewal efforts in the United States, and led to the landmark Supreme Court decision *Berman v. Parker* that established the legal framework for comprehensive land use planning. The Redevelopment Act of 1945 marked the beginning of Southwest's urban renewal and the creation of the DC Redevelopment Land Agency (RLA). In 1950, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCPPC) published a comprehensive plan, identifying Southwest as a "problem area" needing redevelopment.

The original plan limited lot coverage to 30% and provided substantial open space. This formula rendered many of these residential projects as technically "underdeveloped" today. Current zoning standards and the DC Office of Planning's promotion of major in-fill projects near Metro stations makes the Southwest Renewal Area a prime target for intense development. As a result the integrity of the neighborhood's design is threatened.

Carroll Laundry Smokestack

14th Street and Fairlawn Avenue, SE

Nominated by: Fairlawn Citizens Association and the DCPL Landmarks Committee

The stack, built in 1916 for the Anderson Tire Manufacturing Company, is constructed of blonde glazed brick. The stack stands on a concrete base, and according to its building permit, stands 110 feet tall. A landmark in the truest sense of the word, the stack towers over all of the other structures in the neighborhood.

The name “Carroll” is clearly visible in black painted very large letters running down the northwest side of the stack. The present owner of the building has requested permission to demolish the adjacent buildings and smoke stack for a new charter school building.

The Gralyn Hotel and Woodbine Apartments **1745 – 1755 N Street, NW**

Nominated by: Dupont Circle Conservancy

Located on N Street between 17th Street and Connecticut Avenue, NW, the Gralyn Hotel and Woodbine Apartments were built between 1889 and 1902 and are notable examples of Georgian Revival architecture.

Vacant for almost a decade, the Gralyn Hotel and Woodbine Apartments are in desperate need of restoration. The current owner, N Street Follies Limited, which purchased the buildings in 1988, initially sought to convert the properties into a 75-foot-tall residential and commercial structure, which would have required demolition of portions of the historic buildings. Because of this proposal and others around the Dupont Circle neighborhood, neighbors lobbied city leaders in 1991 to create an “overlay district,” which restricted the height of buildings in the neighborhood north of M Street. N Street Follies Limited has left the structures open to the elements with leaking roofs and broken windows. The DC Board of Condemnation for Insanitary Buildings cited the owner in 2005 for this clear case of demolition-by-neglect, and required N Street Follies Limited to fix the roofs and board up the exposed windows.

For more information on the threat facing these sites, please see the DCPL website.



Carroll Laundry Smokestack - Photo by Glen Davis



Gralyn Hotel and Woodbine Apartments - Photo by Jeremiah Cohen

continued from page 1

In 1965, Mies was selected to design the library. Despite international recognition and works in major cities, Mies had never designed a building in the nation's capital. The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library was designed in 1965-1966. Construction began after Mies' death in 1969 and the building opened in 1972. The International Style building has a uniform, low-rise, rectangular mass – the structure is composed of evenly spaced steel columns and beams framing large glass curtain walls. The building is notable for its ground floor loggia, formed by the recessed first story. The first floor of the library consists of an entry vestibule entry, a large main lobby area, four “core” areas and two subject area reading rooms.

The original information desk (at the center of the lobby space and immediately in front of the entry doors), and the circulation desks (to either side of the doors) remain, with their granite tops and bases intact. To either side of the main lobby, at the east and west ends of the building are reading rooms. These rooms extend the grand proportions of the lobby and are encased in glass on all sides, making them bright and spacious.

Although floors 2-4 retain a remarkable degree of integrity, it is the 4th floor that exhibits the purest expression of Mies' design aesthetic. This is most evident in the Director's Office, the Board Room, and the Director's Reception Room, which still contain the original architect-designed furniture.

In addition to this architecturally stunning buildings design, its name is historically significant as it was a grassroots effort beginning in August of 1970 in the form of petitions and letters to the Library's Board of Trustees to name the library in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. At a hearing on the issue in January 1971, **Charles Cassell**, a school board member and local architect said, “we are not asking politely, we are demanding that you name the library after Martin Luther King, Jr.” The board voted 5-2 in 1971 to name the library after the slain civil rights leader.

Landmarks Fire Fund

DCPL has established a fund to assist with the planning costs associated with preservation efforts at Eastern Market and the Georgetown Public Library. To contribute to this fund, please send a check to DCPL and note “Landmark Fires” in the memo line. If you wish the money to go towards one particular building, please note that as well. To donate by credit card, please call the DCPL offices at 202.783.5144. All funds are tax-deductible and will be acknowledged in the DC Preservation League e-Advocate and Annual Report.

2007 Preservation Month Activities

DCPL celebrated Preservation Month with four free membership events including a private opening reception for the exhibition: ***The Jewel of Georgetown: Dumbarton House Celebrates Seventy-Five Years.***

Dumbarton House, a Federal period historic house museum and national headquarters for The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America, officially opened to the public in May 1932. The current exhibition documents the 1931 restoration of the property under the direction of local architect Horace W. Peaslee and architectural historian Fiske Kimball, the building of a collection of Federal period decorative and fine arts by the National Society, as well as current and future collection and restoration programs. The exhibit will remain on view through December 29, 2007. For more information on Dumbarton House, please see the website at www.dumbartonhouse.org.

A tour of the **Lee Fendall House Museum and Gardens** Located within the original boundary stones of the District of Columbia (1801-1852), DCPL members were invited to take a “behind the scenes” tour of this unique historic structure and learn about the museum's ongoing preservation efforts and challenges. Significant for its history as well as its architecture, this telescoping house was built by Philip Fendall in 1785 on land purchased from his cousin Revolutionary War hero “Light Horse” Harry Lee. Renovated in 1850, the house combines 18th century features with 19th century Greek Revival and Italianate style embellishments. For more information on the museum, please see LFH's website at www.leefendallhouse.org

A workshop to **Discover the Mystery of Your House History** given by local historian **Matthew Gilmore** for a hands-on workshop on utilizing the resources of the Martin Luther King Jr., Memorial Library, and other public records, to reveal the secrets of your house.

A reception to acknowledge the 2007 list of **Most Endangered Places** at the General Federation of Women's Clubs International Headquarters on N Street. Founded in 1890, **General Federation of Women's Clubs** (GFWC) is one of the world's oldest nonpartisan, nondenominational women's volunteer service organizations. In 1922, GFWC clubwomen purchased 1734 N Street, NW in Washington DC to serve as the Federation's International Headquarters. Built in 1875, the five-story, stone and brick Victorian mansion was designated a National Historic Landmark in December 1991 by the National Park Service. For more information on the GFWC go to www.gfwc.org



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Thanks to Monarc Construction and DCPL Trustee John Bellingham, DCPL has a newly outfitted office. Stop by and see us in room 324 of the National Building Museum.



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