

Preservation Piedmont
P.O. Box 2803
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<http://avenue.org/pp>

Newsletter
Spring/Summer 2008



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THE DEMOLITION REVIEW: AN EFFICIENT TOOL TO PROTECT ENDANGERED LANDMARKS

The demolition of Eugene Bradbury's Compton House on December 27, 2007 by the Jefferson Scholars Foundation underscored the weakness of local preservation ordinances. The Charlottesville City Council all supported the preservation of the house and yet seemed powerless to help in its preservation.

This has raised the question of how to better protect endangered landmarks against the threat of demolition? This is a challenging question that has been successfully addressed by public officials across the country, in the cities of Cambridge, Baton Rouge and San Antonio.

Still unknown in Virginia, the demolition review ordinance is a legal tool providing communities with the means to protect significant buildings and sites threatened by destruction, neglect or misuse.* The advantage

adopting in the demolition review procedure is that it helps to prevent demolition by providing a limited time period in which public officials and citizens can move to protect threatened historic buildings and landscapes. As we have learned in Charlottesville, it is very difficult to effectively document and register all buildings with historical value; the city lacks the staff and budget to complete the necessary surveys.

A demolition review ordinance would function as an emergency system that would allow time for a preservation commission or special committee to review the options when significant historical buildings, structures, or sites (generally those over 40 or 50 years) are threatened, including barring demolition or permitting demolition to proceed after a building is recorded.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF DANIEL BLUESTONE



PHOTO COURTESY OF BILL EMORY

THE COMPTON HOUSE, 1913-2007

ROCK HILL: PEDESTRIANS, BICYCLES, AND HERITAGE

Preservation Piedmont has worked recently to protect local historic resources, including the Rock Hill gardens, from the threats posed by the proposed Meadowcreek Parkway and the Route 250/McIntire Road interchange.

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources has determined that there are significant historic resources in every quadrant around the proposed 250 interchange, including the McIntire/Covenant School, two historic houses designed by Eugene Bradbury on Park Hill, the gardens at Rock Hill, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (thought to be the first Vietnam Veterans Memorial built in the United States), and McIntire Park itself.

According to the National Historic Preservation Act, federal undertakings, like highway interchanges, are supposed to engage in what is called a Section 106 Review to assess historic resources and to attempt to design and build in a way that protects or mitigates damage to historic buildings, landscapes, and archeological sites.

For Section 106 reviews to be successful a full understanding of historic resources really needs to be in place before design begins. In the case of the proposed 250 interchange the consultants, the citizen interchange steering committee, and the Charlottesville City Council had already settled upon preferred alternatives for the interchange design before engaging in a substantial Section 106 review.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF DANIEL BLUESTONE

REMEMBERING MARTHA GLEASON

Martha Gleason, one of the driving forces in the creation of Preservation Piedmont, passed away in December, 2007. A life-long resident of Charlottesville, Martha had a deep love for the city's people and history, and a strong commitment to preserving the buildings and spaces which contribute to Charlottesville's character. Kay Slaughter wrote, shortly after Martha's death, "Without Martha, Preservation Piedmont would not exist." Martha thought that Charlottesville needed a permanent preservation organization, and once she had the idea, "she just kept at it," said Kay. Any one who knew Martha will remember her persistence in advocating for causes she thought worthwhile.

Martha was full of stories about Charlottesville and Albemarle County. She remembered sitting on the curb of High Street watching FDR drive through town on his way to visit friends at Kenwood, near Monticello. The top of the car was down, FDR waved to people who had gathered to watch him drive by, and there were no body

guards visible. She remembered horseback-riding at the stables run by Elliewood Keith and her intense disappointment when she learned that one of her favorite horses had been bought by Henry Morgenthau, a member of FDR's cabinet, and shipped to Washington. She had stories to tell about being a parent during the desegregation era of the 1950's and 1960's when Venable School closed for a time, and stories about the opening days of Jefferson School when it served as an integrated all-city 6th grade school following Massive Resistance. She remembered going to see movies at the Paramount Theater on Saturday afternoons and passing huge piles of camel-hair coats in the lobby which had been left there by UVa students on their way to the afternoon show. Martha was a vivid storyteller and it was easy to picture Charlottesville of the 1940's and 1950's as she talked. Her stories of the past and her frankly expressed visions for the future of Charlottesville will be missed.

-Helena Devereux

See the back of this newsletter for information about the new Martha Gleason Award and Founders' Fund.

PAPA: THE PIEDMONT AREA PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

The Piedmont Area Preservation Alliance held its annual Spring Workshop Meeting on March 6th at the offices of the Piedmont Environmental Council. Brian Broadus, an ex officio member of the Preservation Piedmont Board, explained how to register for the joint PAPA blog (found at <http://preserveva.wordpress.com/>). David Neuman, PAPA representative from the University of Virginia and the Architect for the University, offered to host the Fall 2008 PAPA meeting at a University venue. The tentative meeting date would be Thursday evening, September 18th. Following the PAPA Steering Committee's recommendation, the University's organization of the Fall meeting was seconded by another PAPA member, this one being Preservation Piedmont, which will also act as the 501(c)(3) organization with which PAPA organizational dues will be deposited, but sequestered from Preservation Piedmont's own monies. Preservation Piedmont will then organize the March 2009 Spring Workshop Meeting.

The annual dues for each dues-collecting member organization of the Piedmont Area Preservation Alliance are \$200.00, and will be used for the annual gatherings and other Alliance expenses. The PAPA decided that it would hold a press conference and issue a press release announcing the formation of the organization in May 2008. The PAPA plans a publicly-directed Preservation Week for April 2009, in cooperation with the University of Virginia.

Delegate-suggested topics on which the Alliance might concentrate its attention included:

- Hold an energy-conservation workshop directed at historic homes.
- Hold a class that gives an expert's introduction to the Virginia and Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit Programs.
- Sponsor an Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society exhibit on successful historic preservation and restoration projects.
- Realtor and Real Estate Agent training sessions about register-eligible properties and archaeological digs
- Hold a "grand homes tour" as a fundraiser. Use the funds for a workshop for the preservation and restoration of rural African-American churches or Rosenwald Schools.
- Tour local historic preservation landmarks, including limited-resource preservation success stories such as the Nimmo House.
- Sponsor lectures by international preservation specialists, coordinated with the lecture series for the University of Virginia's School of Architecture.
- Lead an "anti-tour of Vinegar Hill" that describes the buildings and community that was lost to "urban renewal" there.
- Showcase ways that historic buildings have been incorporated into new developments. Show how the old meets the new and that historic preservation is complementary to modern and "sustainable" design.

The PAPA Steering Committee will continue to meet monthly. *-Brian Broadus*

OUTREACH AND NETWORKING COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Outreach and Networking Committee has been working over the past year to establish contact with local historical societies and other preservation-minded groups in order to share information more effectively. The launch of the Piedmont Area Preservation Alliance (PAPA), of which Preservation Piedmont is a key member, has further enhanced communication and collaboration between like-minded organizations. In conjunction with PAPA's Steering Committee, Preservation Piedmont and the O & N Committee is primarily responsible for planning the first annual Preservation Week. At an upcoming press conference the official existence of PAPA and this event will be announced. Preservation Week will kick off on a First Friday, April 3, 2009, with an exhibition opening at the Charlottesville Community Design Center. Proposals for additional Preservation Week events will be solicited from the PP and PAPA network of interested parties and may include: hands-on workshops, speakers, walking tours, and visits to privately held properties not regularly open to the public. Other session ideas and proposals are welcomed. *-Justin Sarafin*

ROCK HILL, CONT.

The preferred alternatives both include raising route 250 approximately thirty feet, or three stories, into the air over its present grade at the intersection of 250 and McIntire Road. The sound and visual impact of these designs on the surrounding historic resources will be quite detrimental. Any mitigation of the damage will be limited because the proposed budget for the project is already between 4 and 8 million dollars over the funds available.

When the project consultants, RK & K Engineers, and the city staff turned their attention to historic resources to confront the Section 106 preservation review process, they had already identified preferred alternatives. They worked with consulting parties including Daniel Bluestone of Preservation Piedmont, Mary Howard of APVA/Preservation Virginia, Peter Kleeman and Rich Collins of STAMP, and Collette Hall of the North Downtown Residents Association. After three major meetings, last November, January, and February, the consultants rejected nearly every aspect of the advice they received to protect historic resources and, perhaps unsurprisingly, endorsed the alternatives they had settled upon before the Section 106 process was initiated. The protections intended by the Section 106 process have in that way been turned on their head.

As this project moves forward there is perhaps a glimmer of hope that one aspect of the project will be modified. Increasingly the public and the City Council have begun to realize that running bike and pedestrian access through the interchange will provide the public with a rather nasty approach to the park. Currently the favored C1 alternative has bicyclist doing battle with automobiles for road space around a major rotary while pedestrians

walk under seven lanes of traffic to reach the park.

A feasible alternative to the poorly designed pedestrian and bicycle access may well be to have these routes separated from the interchange and channeled through a revitalized Rock Hill garden, using the Park Street Bridge rather than the proposed interchange as a key point of access.

The Rock Hill garden is among the most complex residential garden landscapes in all of Charlottesville. It was designed and built in the 1930s under the auspices of Reverend Henry Alford Porter, the man who spent 16 years as the minister of the Charlottesville's First Baptist Church before retiring in 1945. Reverend Porter's garden included a section for a small lake, a series of boxwood parterres, a monumental series of stone garden terraces with stone stairs and walks, a stream section along Schenck's Branch, and a woodlands section with stone switchback trails. The entire property is surrounded by an impressive stone wall built of stone quarried on the Rock Hill estate.

The Rock Hill garden, now the property of the Monticello Area Community Action Agency, has become overgrown and somewhat tainted by its historical association with the Rock Hill Academy, a segregated school established as part of massive resistance to court ordered desegregation. The irony of this aspect of Rock Hill history is that Reverend Porter was a progressive on issues of race, preaching tolerance, inclusion, and integration between the races. In fact, in his will he left his estate to Virginia Union University to establish an endowment for the training of African American Baptist ministers. The relocation of planned pedestrian and bicycle access to McIntire Park to Rock Hill would permit our community to reclaim and revitalize an extraordinary garden landscape and to interpret the complex social and environmental history of the site.

-Daniel Bluestone

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Membership Committee produces Preservation Piedmont's newsletter and last winter came out with a membership questionnaire that will help the group serve its members better. The committee has created and updated a membership database in order to permit Preservation Piedmont to have an accurate record of membership status for the first time. The database will aid in fundraising from dues and will help the organization ensure that newsletters follow members when they move.

-Gina Haney

DEMOLITION REVIEW, CONT.

The demolition reviews are triggered by the filing of a demolition permit. The review bodies involved in the procedure have a variable time period in which to make their determination regarding the historical significance of the building, structure or site. In some cases public hearings can help to delay further the demolition review. The delay periods mentioned in existing review ordinances run from 30 days to 2 years. Preservation Commissions will examine enough evidence to enable them to make an informed decision regarding the building's age and significance in relation to a wider context such as history and architectural history.

The delay period attached to the demolition review is of vital importance. It will allow time and opportunity for the municipality or other interested parties to find some alternatives to the demolition such as negotiating a preservation solution with the owner allowing tax incentives, financial assistance, or to find a buyer willing to preserve, rehabilitate or restore the building.

Last but not least, crucial to the demolition review ordinance's success is the reinforcement of penalties for the applicants who are not complying with the law. Often penalties include "significant fines for each day of the offense, and the non-issuance of a permit to develop or

occupy the property for a specific period of time."

An effective ordinance aims to insure that historic structures continue to serve an important and still productive role in our communities. The ordinance won't always prevent demolition but at least it will enable local committees to assess the building's historical significance through careful documentation (photographic evidence, plans, maps, documentation relevant to prior occupants, etc.) or enable the storage and efficient reuse of salvaged materials such as significant architectural pieces. In the latter, the action will be part of a conscious effort to preserve resources and a step towards a better use of our built environment.

The demolition of Eugene Bradbury's Compton House might have been avoided if Virginia had possessed a demolition review ordinance. We hope that a new approach in preservation law will help in a not too far future our effort to protect a built environment that is often fragile. Will Charlottesville and surrounding counties be the first in the State of Virginia to adopt these new regulatory measures?
-Anita Anderson

* "Demolition review ordinances typically set forth objective criteria for determining which properties are subject to review...Many communities use "50 years" as the critical benchmark. See, e.g. Boston, Massachusetts, Boulder, Colorado, and New Castle, Delaware...Alternatively, the demolition ordinance may only apply to properties identified on a historic survey or listed on a state historic register or the National Register of Historic Places...some communities limit the scope of protection afforded to buildings located within a specific geographic area. Julia H. Miller, *Protecting Potential Landmarks Through Demolition Review*, p. 2. (A National Trust preservation law publication available on line).

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL FORM

Preservation Piedmont is a non-profit corporation dedicated to protecting historic structures, sites, landscapes and neighborhoods, as well as rural areas and open spaces. We do this in order to create an appreciation for the historic resources of the Central Virginia Piedmont region. Based in Charlottesville, we also serve Albemarle and bordering counties.

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|-------------------------------------|-------|--|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Student | \$10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | \$35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit Organization | \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Business | \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life | \$300 | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Patron | \$300 |

If you would like to initiate or renew a membership, please enclose payment and make checks payable to:

Preservation Piedmont
P.O. Box 2803
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Preservation Piedmont is also establishing an email network in order to better serve our members and quickly update preservationists throughout the region about important preservation issues. Please include an email address.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone/Email: _____

http://avenue.org/pp
Charlottesville, VA 22902
P.O. Box 2803



A REQUEST OF AND REPORT TO THE MEMBERSHIP

On the reverse of this page is a Membership Application/Renewal Form. Please enter the information requested and return, along with the appropriate contribution, to our mailing address. Be assured of the Board's high gratitude for your new or continuing membership in Preservation Piedmont. We are working more diligently than ever to protect historic resources in Central Virginia and we invite you to participate with us closely. You're welcome at our monthly Board meeting: date, time, place, and minutes (of past meetings) are posted on our website. You are particularly encouraged to sign up with one of our Board Committees: Membership, Outreach and Networking, Grants and Development, and Advocacy, Documentation, and the newly-formed Preservation Week Committee.

What are these committees about?

Membership refines our mailing list and member database and publishes our newsletter. Membership keeps the Preservation Piedmont website up-to-date and makes it an excellent first stop for those interested in local or general historic preservation. Outreach and Networking promotes transparency and unity of purpose among the non-governmental organizations that make up the fractured private historic preservation community. The Preservation Week Committee is beginning planning for the first annual "Preservation Week" in Central Virginia in April, 2009. Grants and Development awards and pursues resources for helping to document and preserve local cultural resources. Advocacy represents the cause of preservation before planning commissions, review boards, boards of supervisors, and town and city councils and monitors threatened properties. Documentation enters the field to gather photographs and measured drawings of structures that are threatened or slated for demolition. We are pleased to serve you and look forward to your continuing sponsorship and participation.

New Founders' Fund and Award Honoring Martha Gleason

The Preservation Piedmont Board has approved the creation of a Founders' Fund and a Martha Gleason Award. The Founders' Fund will be used to recognize the work of an individual or group engaged in an outstanding preservation effort. More information about the Fund will follow. To nominate a local preservation advocate or if you would like to be on the nominating committee, please email Preservation Piedmont President Eryn Brennan at esb4z@virginia.edu.