

of Preservation Historic Winchester, Inc.



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HOLIDAY HOUSE TOUR OPPORTUNITIES

Each year, the Holiday House Tour requires the services of up to 75 volunteers, mostly as house docents, but also in other areas such as food preparation, decorating and organization. All of our volunteers enjoy participating in the event and you might also.

Do you know of homeowners in the historic district who might be interested in sharing their home for a festive tour? We have been aiming at locating the tour in a walkable cluster, which the patrons seem to enjoy and which makes it easier to manage in the event of inclement weather. Our tour is always held on the first Sunday in December; for 2005, the date is December 4.



If you or your neighbors or friends have berried holly (preferably American) nandina or magnolia trees that need trimming, PHW will send out a crew just before the house tour to do the work and then make the material available for our decorators and our Bough and Dough Shop. We would be happy to provide this service, but will only need a few properties, so please contact us well in advance to get your name on the list.

If you are interested in any of the above areas or have other suggestions for the Holiday House Tour, please drop a note to PHW at 2 North Cameron Street, Winchester, VA 22601 or call the office at 667-3577. *

GREAT WEATHER; ENJOYABLE TOUR

A beautiful day welcomed 2004's Holiday House Tour, which was enjoyed by about 550 visitors. Indeed, it was the first time in three years that inclement weather did not have a negative impact on the turnout. Our Bough and Dough shop, held in Dr. Meredith Green's 1930's garage on Germain Street, also benefited from the pleasant weather and sold out all baked goods and greens by the end of the tour.

As in past years, the variety in decorations and family tales peaked the visitors' interest. For some, Renee and David Thompson's antique furniture, some of which came from Soldier's Rest, David's family home in Clarke County which two hundred years ago was home to Revolutionary War hero General Daniel Morgan, was the highlight of the tour. Civil War buffs enjoyed M.B. "Pete" and Caz Clowe's collection of letters from the 1850's signed by Jefferson Davis when he was Secretary of War. The Clowes also opened the second floor of their home, a bonus for most house tours, which had some interesting architectural features including a hidden ladder to the attic. A long line of anxious guests waited to see the exceptional home of Bruce and Donna Downing. The Downings' most recent renovation included a newly designed and expanded kitchen, which got a lot of attention. Christmas ornaments made from runway glass lights used in England during World War II made for an interesting story, as did their extensive art collection, pre-Columbian sculpture and several pieces of Shenandoah Valley furniture.

Two of Winchester's newer families also graciously opened their homes for the tour. Robert and Mary Lauer's 90-year-old American Arts and Crafts style home was a perfect showplace for the Lauer's antique furniture and Robert's art. In three years, they have been able to restore much of their home. Stan and Jan Corneal, also new residents from Florida, displayed art from Stan's grandfather, who counted famed artist N.C. Wyeth among his friends. The Miller Family, builders and first owners of the house, provided a materials list for the construction of the Corneal's 65-year-old home, which was displayed in the house and should be of interest to the Corneals for years to come.

Lastly, the preview party, held at the lovely home of Dr. Llewellyn and Donna Kitchen, was enjoyed by more than 90 guests who were served an elegant buffet prepared by several local restaurants including One Block West, The Village Square Restaurant, Sucilee's House of Thai and Passage to India. *

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NAILING DOWN THE HISTORY OF AN OLD HOME

BY VAL VAN METER, THE WINCHESTER STAR

How old is your house? If it was purchased from a developer, you probably know. But if you live in a house that was crafted in the 18th or 19th century, that question could be harder to answer.

John G. Lewis and David H. Edwards provided some clues to dating homes with history on February 19, 2005 at the Handley Regional Library. With the help of slides and artifacts, the two experts explained how architectural styles and materials such as nails, lathes, and even traces of saw cuts can box in a construction period.

When John Lewis, 75, looks at a period house, he wants to see the attic and the cellar. Looking at the original rafter and joists can tell him a lot about the original construction.

Lewis has been rehabilitating old homes, frame, stone and brick, for over 50 years. He has personally restored five 18th century houses and has surveyed, investigated and prepared architectural drawings for another 60, mostly from the 18th century.

Even if the house has been modified over the years, the attic and cellar are most likely to show original structure, said Edwards, who is head of the Winchester office of the state Department of Historic Resources.

Lewis recalled an "exciting" find in one 1800's house, where the metal roof concealed original wooden shingles. These, he said, had an interesting property. Exposed to rain, the wood swelled, effectively closing holes and protecting the interior of the building under renovation.

Attics and cellars are most likely to become repositories for original house parts, like shutters, which are removed and never replaced, he said.

The history of nails can be a clue to the age of a building. Lewis has a selection of nails from a 200 year-period.

Until the industrial revolution, nails were made by hand, "expensive and scarce," Edwards noted.

When buildings burned, people sifted through the ashes to retrieve nails, he said.

In the late 18th century, manufactured nails began to make an appearance.

"(Thomas) Jefferson had a nail factory," Edwards said. The "cut nails, which were actually sliced from iron plates, were slimmer and more pointed, than hand-forged nails, he pointed out.

Not all cut nails date from the same period, Edwards said, and can also help date construction.

Construction styles began to change in the 19th century. Different styles were popular at different times and can be pointers. New styles usually arrived in the Tidewater area and moved west over time, he said.

Then there are written records. Tax records and insurance policies are good places to start searching for housing dates, said Lewis, who has spent many hours in regional courthouses tracking records.

His efforts helped establish the 10,000-acre Goose Creek Historic District, along with the Hillsboro, Lincoln-Middleburg, Taylorstown, and Winchester Historic Districts.

Insurance companies often took pictures of the properties they insured, he noted.

Edwards pointed to the Sanborne Insurance maps as a wonderful resource for building hunters.

"They are very detailed and were updated every five to 10 years," he said.

The original maps were color-coded to show the type of construction material, Lewis pointed out. The shape of the building was outlined, so future maps also showed additions to structure, he said.

Handley Library Archives has copies of the maps and they are also on microfilm, Lewis said.

Some insurance companies date back a while, Edwards said. The Mutual Assurance Company was formed in Richmond in 1794, he said. "It is still in business today."

Lewis, who spent much of his working life as a contractor specializing in old houses, said the most interesting he worked on included a two-story, stone structure dating to 1780.

The property had been used as a barn, he said, and then abandoned for 25 years. The interior was "all original."

It came with a stone bank barn, smoke house and spring house.

Such houses are the easiest to renovate, Lewis said, because nothing much has been done to them.

"You're not paying for a 1920s coal-fired heating system or outdated wiring you have to tear out," he said.

You can add modern necessities without damaging the original fabric of the house, he added.

One classic house had its air conditioning concealed in valances over the windows, he noted.

Lewis said anyone considering a historic renovation can get an idea of the cost by consulting the current per-foot price for new construction.

The cost, he said, will always depend on what you do and how you do it.

"The least money spent, the better preservation job you do," he said.

Edwards said anyone wishing to upgrade an older house may be eligible for state and federal income tax credits, if the restoration is done within guidelines of the National Park Service.

However, he said, he does not recommend taking an older building, say from the 1830s, and tearing out changes made, possibly, during the Victorian era. Those changes are part of the history of that house, he said.

"We want to respect the history of that house, and the generations who lived in it," he said. ✪



Star Photo Jeff Taylor

Architectural historian John G. Lewis holds a board of antique nails used during the presentation.



Star Photo Jeff Taylor

Architectural historian David A. Edwards, director of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources' Winchester Regional Office, looks through a model of 18th century timber frame construction that he used during the presentation.

HOUSE TOUR TRENDS

For years, we have wondered how visitors found out about the PHW Holiday House tour. This year, we not only realized how much they enjoyed the event, but also determined how they learned about it.

A number of patrons visiting the Lauer House at the south end of Washington Street on the 5th of December may remember being asked how they heard about the Holiday House Tour. There were 315 responses to this question out of a total of about 550 people who took the tour. Of those who answered the survey, 49% said that they had read about the tour in the newspaper. Nine out of ten times this meant The Winchester Star. Twenty three percent of the respondents said that the PHW flyer was their main information source. Another 23% said that they had learned about the tour by word of mouth and 5% said that they had learned about the tour from posters, the tourist bureau and the Winchester Events web site.

Most of those taking the tour were from Winchester or were friends visiting Winchester residents. About 10% came from beyond the immediate Winchester area. Most everyone taking the tour said that they were regular patrons of this annual event. About 10% said that they were taking the tour for the first time.

A number of the respondents complained that the article on the house tour that appeared in The Winchester Star came out too late for some people they knew to include the tour in their weekend plans. A few patrons complained about the \$3 per ticket price increase. One person said that she had come to the Winchester house tour because it was less expensive than tours in other nearby towns. The most frequent recommendation was that comprehensive information about the tour, including house locations and directions, should be more readily available two or three weeks before the event. It was also suggested that local area nurseries would be good spots for advertising the tour. A number of regular patrons lauded the fact that the tour is always held during the first weekend of December, making it convenient for them to include it in their annual holidays plans.

The mild, sunny weather that occasioned this year's tour helped boost the turnout. Efficient advanced planning and good volunteer support also contributed to a successful event. Anyone interested in supporting the 2005 house tour should contact PHW now during the initial planning phase. ✱

COMMUNITY RESTORATION AND REVITALIZATION ACT: IMPROVING THE REHAB TAX CREDIT

BY PATRICK LALLY

The historic rehabilitation tax credit is the nation's largest federal incentive promoting urban and rural revitalization through private investment in re-using historic buildings. The credit allows the owner of a certified historic structure to receive a federal income-tax credit equal to 20 percent of the amount spent on qualified rehabilitation costs. There is also a 10 percent credit for older, non-historic buildings.

Since it was first enacted in 1976, the rehab credit has been widely used as an effective tool for transforming vacant and underutilized buildings into safe, decent, and, in many cases, affordable places to live and do business. Yet property developers have had difficulty using the rehab tax credit, particularly for affordable housing. Several teams of experts have studied this incentive and concluded that certain structural features in the tax code actually impede the use of the rehab credit as a tool for producing affordable housing.

The National Trust, through a grant from the Ford Foundation, held a series of meetings with practitioners engaged in the development, financing, and syndication of properties making use of the rehab credit. The goal was to build consensus on what needed to be done to enable these practitioners to employ the credit more effectively for small-scale projects that promote economic and community development. These discussions yielded concrete examples of how the credit could be improved.

In late November 2004, Representatives Rob Portman (R-OH) and William Jefferson (D-LA) introduced the Community Restoration and Revitalization Act. The measure would facilitate the use of the credit in smaller, "Main Street" type projects and would make it easier for developers to pair the historic rehab credit with the low-income housing credit. It would provide a stronger incentive for creating housing – both affordable and market-rate – in so-called "difficult to develop" older neighborhoods. In short, it would help the rehab credit achieve its full potential by spurring greater reinvestment in, and bringing new vitality to, the communities that need it most.

Provisions of the Act

The Community Restoration and Revitalization Act is a package of amendments that would further the mission of the rehab credit by


spurring greater investments in smaller commercial projects and Main Street commercial properties in older neighborhoods – particularly where there is a critical need for affordable housing and community revitalization. Specifically, the existing law allows the rehab credit to be "paired" with the low-income housing tax credit in certain projects. However, in 2003, for example, of all the housing units produced with the rehab credit, only 7 percent combined the incentive with the low-income housing tax credit. The Community Restoration and Revitalization Act would make the changes needed to increase the percentage.

In addition, the bill would:

- Decrease the "basis reduction" requirement, a serious disincentive that currently lowers a project's taxable basis (the "basis" upon which the allowable amount of credits are taken) dollar-for-dollar specifically according to the amount of historic rehab credits used for a development project.
- Increase the historic rehab credit in the most difficult to develop and disinvested areas.
- Make the 10 percent portion of the credit available for housing, and change the definition of "older building" from "built before 1936" to any property "50 years old or older."
- Enrich the historic rehab credit from 20 to 40 percent in projects that are \$2 million or less to target those "Main Street" type developments in which transaction costs associated with using the rehab credit act as a disincentive.
- Ease the rules governing nonprofit deals so that more community-oriented projects move forward.

To learn more about the Community Restoration and Revitalization Act, to follow developments, and to find out how to urge your representative to support it, go to www.capwiz.com/nthp2.

Patrick Lally is director of congressional affairs in the National Trust Department of Public Policy. "This article is excerpted and reprinted with the permission of National Trust Forum, The National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1785 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington DC 20036, (202) 588-6053, www.nationaltrust.org." ✱



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NEWS

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PHW SALUTES HOUSE TOUR VOLUNTEERS

PHW salutes two tireless volunteers who together have worked for the Holiday House Tour for more than fifty years: Brookie Phillips and Betty Orndoff. (Other long-time volunteers, watch future newsletters, you may be next!)

Brookie Phillips brings her Garden Club and flower-arranging experience to the houses she has beautified for the house tour. She likes to see a total house theme, rather than individually done rooms. She recounts borrowing decorative items from all over town to support her themes. She feels she can't do a whole house without help anymore, but stands ready to help others.

Betty Orndoff says her work has really been a family effort: husband, Ed, and daughter, Edwina, have been with her most of the tours. Betty has collected money and sold tickets. She says on cold days, sitting by the door she might as well have been freezing outside.

Both volunteers mention the difficulty of getting homeowners willing to open their houses. Betty Orndoff remembers when the tour was the third Sunday of December and thinks that homeowners were ready by then to get their Christmas trees and other decorations up. She also says so many local holiday activities are going on the first weekend of December that perhaps the second weekend would be better.

Betty recommends a brain-storming session for interested volunteers to see if some of the earlier festivities can be reintroduced. She recalls more special events while the tour was going on like strolling carolers and horse-and-buggy rides. She also remembers extensive baked goods, needlepoint decorations for sale, and PHW volunteers in the homes dressed in period costumes. Betty suggested theme tours, for example, Children's Christmas of Yesteryear one year, Santa collections or Nativity scenes another.

PHW members, home owners, patrons, and the Winchester community heartily thank these two volunteers (and all others) for their dedication and hard work which are so important to PHW's enduring success. *

ARE YOU A PHW MEMBER?



Preservation of Historic Winchester, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting Winchester's architectural heritage. PHW depends on income from membership and contributions to achieve its goals. Members receive discounts, invitations to events, newsletters, access to technical information and opportunities to volunteer for a worthwhile cause.

Join today by completing this form and returning it to PHW, 2 North Cameron Street, Winchester, VA 22601

<input type="checkbox"/>	Individual	\$25
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All contributions above membership dues are tax deductible.

We are in need of members to help with a variety of tasks, and we're going to start with the necessary jobs and go from there. Can we count on you to help?



CALENDAR

2005

June 18

Annual Meeting

Old Stone Presbyterian Church

July 30

2nd Annual John Kirby Day Jazz Festival

Elks Lodge