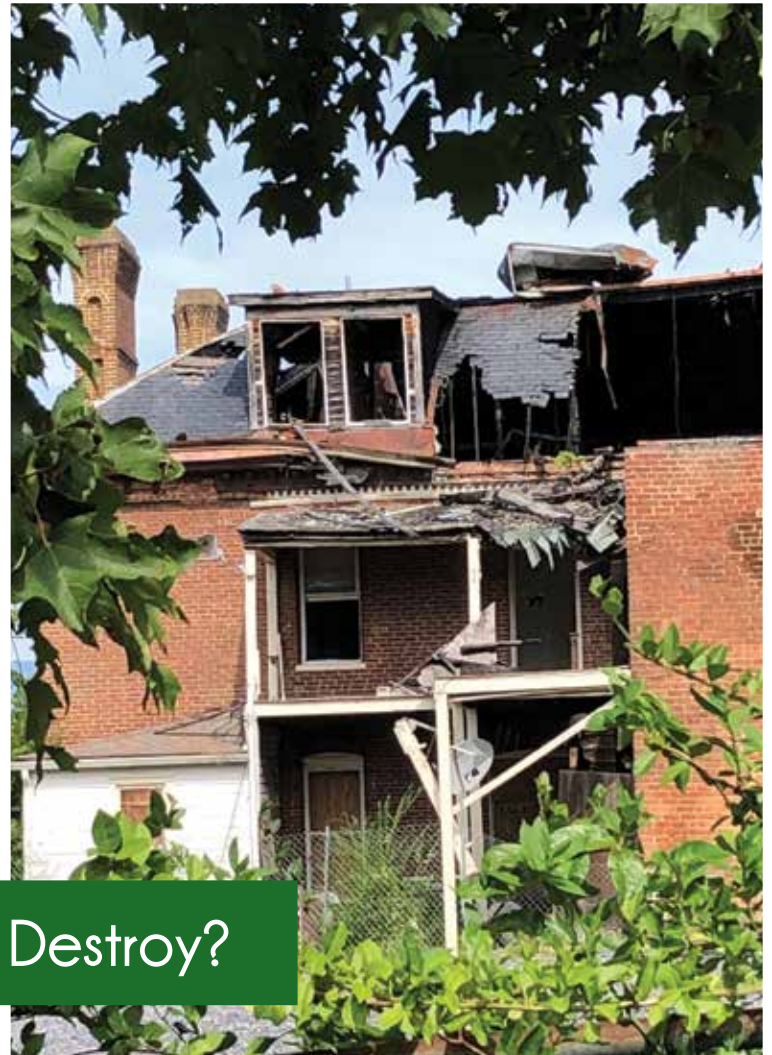
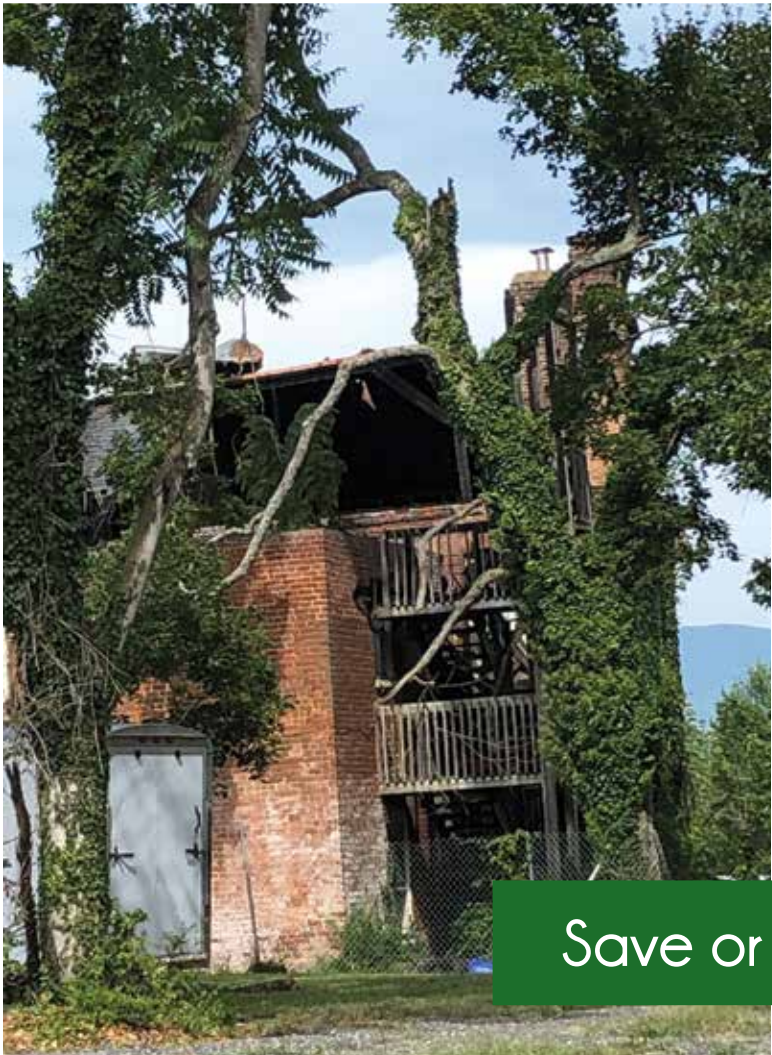


HISTORIC LEXINGTON  
FOUNDATION

Summer 2023

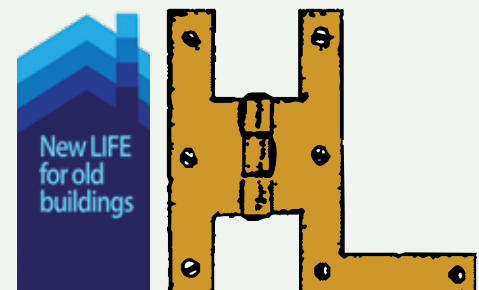
# Newsletter



Save or Destroy?

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- > Don Hasfurther Retires
- > Timber Grove Ribbon Cutting
- > Windows for Brownsburg Slave House





# From the President's Desk

Dear Members and Friends of HLF:

With great sadness I add my comments to our lead article: "Preserving the Legacy of Lexington's John Sheridan." The impending demolition of Sheridan's house on North Randolph will be a significant loss to the wonderful architectural history of Lexington. It is a heartbreaking situation for HLF, whose mission is to preserve such buildings and the history of the people and places they represent. Without major financial support by individuals and organizations in this community that are committed to historic preservation, HLF cannot save the Sheridan House. Time is now short, but a "save" is still possible if others step forward to work with us.

On a more positive note, this newsletter highlights some of the other preservation activities, from Brownsburg to Buena Vista, in which HLF has been engaged. It is always encouraging when owners and organizations help protect our history by restoring historic places such as the Paxton House in Glen Maury Park and the slave quarters in Brownsburg. An early summer highlight was Reed Belden's unveiling of a highway marker memorializing Timber Grove, the earliest settlement in what would become Rockbridge County. Reed, a past HLF president, undertook this project on his own to bring recognition to this little community. The new marker now stands just off US-11 North next to Timber Ridge Presbyterian Church.

I would be remiss if I did not express a farewell to Don Hasfurther, who led HLF so successfully as our executive director for thirteen years and retired this past June. HLF largely owes its growth and many successes to Don's dedication to historic preservation in Lexington and Rockbridge County. We wish Don well in retirement and have no doubt that he will continue to be a valued HLF member and source of ideas and inspiration.

And thanks to each of you for your continued support of HLF's efforts to discover, protect, and preserve more of the historic treasures in Lexington and Rockbridge County.

Dee Joyce-Hayes

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Cover images: Sheridan House  
(courtesy of Margaret Samdahl)



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# Preserving the Legacy of Lexington's John Sheridan

Under this headline in its Summer 2021 newsletter, HLF reported with great hope that the historic home of John Sheridan would be saved. The structure suffered a devastating fire in 2016 which left the rear of the building roofless and exposed to the elements. Two successive owners did nothing to secure the structure. Then two years ago, there was a new owner that vowed to rehabilitate the house and return it to a single-family dwelling. Regrettably since then, no work had been done to secure the house. On July 24, 2023, the owner requested the City's approval to demolish the house.

The request came after a City letter of May 24 was sent to the owner asking how they planned to either pursue a building permit to stabilize and rehabilitate the structure or pursue a demolition permit. The query was based on a subsection of 2018 Virginia Construction Code requiring that an "unsafe building or structure be made safe through compliance with the Building Code, or the Building Official can determine the building must be approved." The owner was asked for a written reply by July 24, the date of their reply.

The Sheridan House, located on the hilltop of North Randolph Street overlooking Washington and Lee University and House

Mountain to the west, is a fine 1890s house built by the plan of William McDowell, the premier Lexington architect of the period. It was built for John Sheridan, an astute businessman, who founded the Sheridan Livery Stable on North Main Street. The business also delivered the mail and ran a stagecoach line between Lexington, Staunton, and Hot Springs. He played a major role in the founding of St. Patrick Catholic Church and the construction of its 1874 church on Henry Street.

Prior to the request for demolition, HLF board member Tom Contos and a Roanoke-based structural engineer inspected the house. They determined that the foundation and exterior load-bearing brick walls and chimneys were sound and can be restored with minimum repairs. The report stated that "given the high value inherent in the existing foundation and wall systems, rebuilding within the building shell would be more cost effective than a second phase of demolition and development from scratch..."

Because the house is a contributing structure in the Lexington historic district, the demolition request had to go before the Architectural Review Board (ARB).

The ARB met on August 3 and approved the request to demolish the structure. HLF president Dee Joyce-Hayes delivered a statement on behalf of HLF, while not opposing the demolition request, spoke to the importance of the Sheridan House and the continued hope that it might be preserved. HLF would very much like to work with an individual or organization that shares its desire to rehabilitate the historic property.



*The Sheridan House as it currently stands (photo by Bruce Macdonald).*



*Ivy grows on the Sheridan House (photo by Bruce Macdonald).*



# Don Hasfurther's Retirement

**T**heologians speak of the zeal of the convert: the idea that those who embrace a system of values later in life often show devotion at least as great as that of those born into it. Like so many of us after an entire life elsewhere, Don Hasfurther came to Lexington—and converted.

He grew up in Maryland and even went to college in Charlottesville (although he had two older brothers who were educated in Lexington, perhaps unknowingly sowing what we reaped). Don went on to graduate work at Johns Hopkins in the School for Advanced International Studies, followed by an accomplishment-filled career in international business, focused on Central and Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union and Russia.

And all the fateful while, a keen and growing interest in historic preservation, was sparked when Don restored a Victorian rowhouse in the District of Columbia.

Soon enough, as happens with so many, came the pull of Rockbridge County, where he took up the faith, first on behalf of the business community, later with the local chapter of the Association for Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, and then, for thirteen monumentally eventful years, as head of Historic Lexington Foundation. He became our secular evangelist. After all, who else do you know who owns not just one but two Rockbridge homes on the National Register?

At a June celebration to mark Don's retirement, held on Donald J. Hasfurther Day as proclaimed by the city of Lexington, Suzanne Barksdale Rice, distinguished former president of HLF, summed up the Hasfurther era well:

**Thank you, Don, for being the driving force behind HLF these many years.**

**Here are a few examples of HLF initiatives that originated in that fertile brain of yours:**

- **Publishing *The Architecture of Historic Rockbridge***
- **Providing Lexington façade improvement grants to local businesses**
- **Restoring the Hamilton Schoolhouse**
- **Establishing the Jordan's Point Historic District**
- **Highlighting the barns of Rockbridge County**
- **Assisting church restorations**
- **Providing historic cemetery conservation**
- **Documenting and preserving slave houses**

**What a remarkable legacy!**

**You have been a wise steward of the places that tell our stories.**



*Don Hasfurther with Mayor Frank Friedman and HLF President Dee Joyce-Hayes*



*Don's retirement party at Mulberry Hill*

# Windows for Brownsburg Slave Quarters

Slave houses have taken a beating—almost from their inception—time, weather, and neglect being the probable causes. The Brownsburg area has a number of them and farsighted, caring property owners in the area have been active in their preservation. Such is the case with the home owned by Michael and Linda Smith. Around 2010, the couple began exploring the Shenandoah Valley for a comfortable retirement area—and they soon discovered Brownsburg. They bought the house and former tavern at 2671 Brownsburg Pike.

The house has a long and colorful history—first owned by a doctor in the pre-Civil War era. His name was Dr. Sam Patterson (1775–1795). The next owner was also a doctor, Dr. William Gold who settled there in the 1830s. His daughter married the next owner, Dr. Samuel Morrison in 1857. Dr. Morrison became such a prominent surgeon that he was summoned to attend to General Stonewall Jackson after the battle of Chancellerville. And, logically the house became a hospital during the Civil War. Finally the

house and property became a tavern in 1873 when John Lavelle immigrated from France. Being right on the Brownsburg turnpike, it was constantly busy.

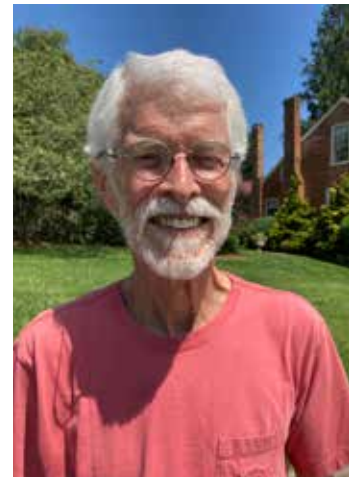
Up until the Emancipation, enslaved people lived in a log house just behind the tavern—which Mike and Linda have lovingly and carefully renovated. We helped! Historical Lexington Foundation gave Mike Smith a grant for funds for the repair and painting of the slave house windows (six in total). The repair and painting was performed by the firm of Justin Higgins, very professionally and all in one week.



*View from inside slave cabin*



*Slave cabin window*



*Michael Smith of Brownsburg*



*Slave cabin exterior*



# Recent Events

On Saturday, April 8, the HLF Annual Meeting took place at Southern Virginia University. Dan Pezzoni gave a program "Hotels and Resorts in Rockbridge County." Founders' Awards were presented to Valerie and John Thomas and the Paxton House Historical Society.



On Tuesday, July 18, at Timber Ridge Presbyterian Church, HLF held a ribbon cutting to dedicate the new Timber Grove Highway marker, which commemorates the first settlement in what would become Rockbridge County. Reed Belden, who researched the history for the marker, cut the ribbon.



Preservation Month events included a Cemetery Conservation Workshop at Falling Spring Presbyterian Church on Saturday, May 6 and a Transportation Walk with HLF board member Byron Faidley on Saturday, May 27.



# Thanks To Our Contributors

We extend our sincere gratitude to all who sustain the work of HLF. We recognize these donors whose gifts were received from August 2022–July 2023.

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We strive for accuracy in our acknowledgments. Please share corrections with us.

# Of Note



*Elizabeth Boetsch stands with Don Hasfurth as he holds his Founders' Award at his retirement part, June 22.*



*Valerie and John Thomas receive a Founders' Award, April 8, for their restoration of their home, The Keep.*



*The Paxton House Historical Society receives a Founders' Award for their continued restoration work, April 8.*



*Reed Belton cuts the ribbon to dedicate the Timber Grove Highway Marker, July 18.*



*Dan Pezzoni speaks at the HLF Annual Meeting, April 8.*



*HLF board member Byron Faidley stands before the Miller's House at the conclusion of his Transportation Walk, May 27.*