

HISTORIC LEXINGTON

FOUNDATION

Spring 2026

Newsletter



The c. 1871 Jefferson Shields House, a Lyle-Simpson Grant recipient.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- > New Community Microgrant Program
- > Annual Meeting in Brownsburg
- > Founders Award
- > Preservation Month
- > Thank You to Our Donors





From the President's Desk

Dear Friends of HLF,

This is my first message as the new president of the HLF board, and I look forward to new beginnings and new projects. However, I am also mindful of the foundation's original beginning and grateful for the many board members, donors and volunteers through several decades whose gifts of time and treasure have enabled HLF to pursue our mission to preserve the special places and structures of this historic community.

In January, HLF welcomed new board members Peter Simpson and Joanne Robblee and their enthusiasm and experience. We miss and thank outgoing board members Jim Busch, Catherine Marcus, Joan Harden and Larry Wiese for their dedicated service to HLF. Special thanks to Larry Wiese for stepping in and stepping up to serve as board president for the second time in two years. In just one year of his leadership in 2025, HLF successfully acquired the Old Stone House on North Main Street for its preservation and protection and HLF also had our most successful fundraising year. We are very grateful for everyone who has contributed to our efforts to conserve and enhance historic buildings and especially the donors who responded to the Old Stone House Fundraising Campaign.

Other good news to report includes two new projects. The first is the Community Microgrant Program, which is described elsewhere in this newsletter. This new grant program is designed to assist homeowners in historic neighborhoods with funding for projects that help preserve and restore the exteriors of their homes in an effort to give new life to old buildings. Grant applications may be submitted at any time but will be reviewed once in the spring and once in the fall to select recipients of grant awards. The first submissions have recently been received for spring of 2026.

The second new project I am pleased to announce is the availability of audio transcripts of the original interviews Dr. Beverly Tucker, a two-term HLF president, conducted as research for the two books she authored about Lexington's Diamond Hill community's residents, *The House on Fuller Street* and *Return to Fuller Street*. The collection of these 20 audio recordings narrated by the author is available on the Historic Lexington Foundation website (www.historiclexington.org) under Projects in the dropdown menu link to Black history. Each of these recorded histories provides an authentic glimpse into the life and history of this unique place.

Preservation Month will be here soon and the opportunity to learn about the history of Sunnyside and its community connections. We invite you to attend this special program on Sunday, May 17 at 2:00 pm to be presented in the Kendal auditorium.

The support of friends and donors like you enables HLF to offer these opportunities and to continue the important work of preserving the past, defining the present and benefitting the future. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Susan Minor, President

Cover image: The c. 1871 Jefferson Shields House, 109 Davidson Street, a recipient of HLF's Lyle-Simpson Grant for restoration of the front porch. Photos thanks to Washington and Lee's Special Collections and Bruce Macdonald.

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New Community Microgrant Program for Lexington Homeowners

Since 1966, Historic Lexington Foundation has maintained a strong track record of strategically investing in the preservation of Lexington's historic buildings. Our investments over the last six decades, made possible due to our generous supporters, have included purchases, renovations, façade grants, major preservation grants, easement acquisitions, and more. We have partnered with property owners, downtown businesses, Main Street Lexington, and the City of Lexington on many of these past projects. Our efforts have inspired others to invest in the revitalization of the historic downtown and elsewhere.

With these successes in mind, HLF recently established a new grant program, which we're calling the Community Microgrant Program. This program will focus attention on, and provide funds for, the preservation and enhancement of Lexington's historic neighborhoods. We also hope these grants will leverage additional resources that further enhance the community. Initially funded with donor gifts, microgrants will be available to owner-occupants seeking financial assistance for exterior preservation projects.

Why is this program necessary? Lexington's historic neighborhoods, where exterior alterations are not subject to City approval, suffer the loss of original materials and features due to well-intentioned home improvements. Replacing wood windows, doors, siding, porches, and trim is quite common due to decay or other damage. But often the replacement elements are "off the shelf" modern materials, or use generic contemporary design trends, rather than replicating the originals that reflect the neighborhood's unique architecture.

Consider this example: your historic-period front porch posts, stairs, and railing are decayed, possibly dangerous, and so you call a local builder to provide an estimate for in-kind repair or replacement. The repair estimate seems surprisingly high, and your builder could save you several thousand dollars by going to a big-box retailer to substitute cheaper pre-made railings and posts made of plastic or metal. Those might do the job, and could certainly save you some money in the short term. But the architectural authenticity and resale value of your home would likely be reduced, and your neighborhood's historic character will also be diminished. So instead, you can take your planned project to HLF, and request a Community Microgrant to assist with the additional expense of repairing or replacing the porch components with appropriate materials and workmanship.

This winter, HLF awarded the first of what we hope will be many microgrants, to assist a homeowner on Fuller Street with porch repairs. Moving forward, other homeowners will have regular opportunities to apply for grants of up to \$5,000 for similar preservation projects.

How the program will work: Twice yearly, HLF will advertise across local media that we are accepting homeowner requests for Community Microgrants. After homeowners contacts us, we'll help them complete a brief application describing their project. From the project requests submitted, HLF will select up to five each cycle (ten per year) to receive a grant.

These unique grants are not loans, and accepting one will not alter a homeowner's property rights in any way. The grants will be competitive, and awarded based on HLF's assessment of overall neighborhood benefit. Applicants will need to provide details about the proposed project's design and cost, but they will not have to provide personal financial information.

Application forms for the Community Microgrant Program can be downloaded from the HLF website at www.historiclexington.org. For additional information about this and other HLF grant programs, homeowners should contact HLF by phone at 540.463.6832 or by email at hlf@rockbridge.net.



HLF's new sign on a property denotes a grant given for historic preservation.



HLF Annual Meeting in Brownsburg

On a beautiful autumn afternoon this September, HLF held its Annual Meeting in the delightful village of Brownsburg. We gathered first in Asbury Methodist Church's Betty Brown Fellowship Hall. HLF Board Chairman Larry Wiese welcomed the large crowd, provided an overview of the year's many accomplishments, and thanked everyone – staff, contributors, and trustees – for their ongoing support of HLF's programs. In 2025, in addition to hosting two programs during Preservation Month, HLF purchased the Old Stone House in Lexington; created the new Community Microgrant Program; launched the HLF Heritage Society for planned giving; assisted various organizations with ongoing preservation projects; and provided funds for stabilization and reconstruction work at Asbury Church, Hamilton School on South Buffalo Creek, and the Jefferson Shields House at 109 Davidson Street in Lexington.

Befitting our meeting location, we also heard from J.R. Rife of the Asbury Church Foundation's Board of Trustees. Asbury Church was established in 1869, with the current building erected in 1917 after the original structure on the site was destroyed by fire. More recently, the church was threatened by structural collapse, which was only discovered when, during a frightening moment at a service in May 2024, the sanctuary floor suddenly settled. Everyone inside was safely evacuated, and subsequent examinations of the structure revealed that the main support girder had failed due to termite damage. This condition rendered the building unsafe for worship or for hosting community events. The foundation led a vigorous fundraising campaign to restore and reopen the building for services and other gatherings. J.R. expressed sincere gratitude to HLF for being the first donor when the emergency calls went out seeking funds to



Larry Wiese and Linda Presley-Beauford present the Founders Award to Suzanne Rice.



J.R. Rife presents the history of Asbury Church.



Lenny Bruno and Alice Danton at the Annual Meeting's reception



Sunny Macdonald, Nancy Hahn, and Tom Camden at the Annual Meeting's reception



The HLF Annual Meeting reception was hosted by the Brownsburg General Store.

restore the church. He also noted there is still much restoration work to do at the church itself, the adjacent parsonage, and the affiliated cemetery.

Perhaps the highlight of the Annual Meeting program was the announcement of Suzanne Barksdale Rice as the recipient of our 2025 Founders' Award. Suzanne, a former trustee and past president, remains a devoted volunteer with HLF, providing regular and expert editorial oversight for our many publications. Her command of language and spirit of service inspires all of us at Historic Lexington Foundation.

Following the program at Asbury Church, attendees strolled through the historic district to the restored Brownsburg General Store, where everyone enjoyed a tour of the building and refreshments provided by the proprietor, Bill McGough, and local residents.



J.R. Rife, Margaret Samdahl, and Bill McGough, owner of the Brownsburg General Store, at Annual Meeting Reception



Preservation Month 2026 — Save the Date!

“The Connections of Sunnyside with our Community”

Program by Cinder Stanton and Tom Contos

Sunday, May 17, 2026, 2:00 PM

Auditorium at Kendal



Fuller Street Book Audio Recordings



Audio readings from Dr. Beverly Tucker’s Fuller Street books are now available on HLF’s website historiclexington.org under Projects>Black Heritage



HLF’s Heritage Society, our planned giving group



Please consider including HLF in your estate planning.



Historiclexington.org/donate

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 January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025.

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

Of Note



Tom Chaffee's c. 1915 home in Lexington's historic district



HLF Preservation members visited the Buena Vista Colored School
Danta Thompson, Lucy Ferree, Tom Camden, Byron Faidley



Jan Perkins and Beverly Tucker at the HLF Major Donor Event



Microgrant recipient:
Jackie Davis and her son, Dr. Ellis Henderson



Thank you to our donors for their fundraising gifts for
HLF's preservation of the c. 1780 Stonehouse.



Arthur Bartenstein invited the HLF board to visit his
c. 1868 Edmondson-Penick house on White Street.