

HISTORIC LEXINGTON FOUNDATION

Winter 2016

Newsletter

2015

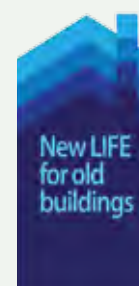
HLF Celebrates Its
50th Anniversary
page 3



c. 1970

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- > *The Architecture of Historic Rockbridge*
Receives Rave Reviews
- > Façade Grant Program Improves Downtown
- > Easement on Lexington Presbyterian Manse
- > 2015 in Photos





From the President's Desk

Perhaps the real value of a birthday or anniversary is its encouragement to reflect on the past. As we begin our celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Historic Lexington Foundation, that is where we find ourselves, remembering.

Our reflections would be incomplete without the early inspiration of those who forged the way of the preservation movement in America. Though it has been written that the national preservation movement began in the 1920s, it was an earlier hero and dreamer, Dr. William Archer Rutherford Goodwin of Williamsburg, Virginia, who inspired us to get serious about this business of keeping old things. As the rector of the historic Bruton Parish Church he supervised its restoration believing that "the past is a living presence that must be carefully guarded." That project was completed as early as 1907. Goodwin's active imagination brought forth the idea of restoring a whole town and with the resources of John D. Rockefeller, "the cradle of our Republic," Williamsburg, was saved for posterity.

An organized movement for preservation here in Rockbridge County began as early as the 1890s when an early branch of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA) made efforts to preserve the Old Monmouth Church and then the old covered bridge in east Lexington in the 1930s. In the mid-1960s, Kappa Alpha national fraternity purchased the Barclay House (now Beaumont) and planned to raze it to build a more modern structure. Concerned citizens in the APVA stepped in to prevent such a move and then turned their attention to accomplish a survey of other buildings in need of attention.

On September 26, 1966, a charter was issued to Historic Lexington Foundation. The early years were devoted to the purchase and restoration of significant historic structures. The Alexander-Withrow Building purchase was financed through loans from United Virginia Bank/Rockbridge and \$2,100 from the Rockbridge Historical Society. That was just the beginning of the protection of historic buildings and their façades. Today, HLF holds easements on seventeen properties including the Jacob M. Ruff House, the Reid-White-Philbin House, Hopkins House, and most recently the Lexington Presbyterian Manse. HLF also recognizes outstanding preservationists each year with Founders Awards being given to W&L, VMI, the Rockbridge County Jail and the old Courthouse, the Southern Inn, the old Troubadour Theatre, the Community Bank in Buena Vista, The Georges, the R.E. Lee Hotel, and owners of numerous private residences.

The 50th Anniversary of HLF proudly cites its current programs, a centerpiece of which is the Robert S. Johnson Façade Grant Program that enables owners of historic buildings in the historic district to receive grants allowing downtown to maintain its best. HLF monitors easements and considers its primary goal to act as stewards of Rockbridge County's historical treasures. We invite all who care to join in the celebration of our ongoing efforts. As we move forward, we recognize that ours is a rich heritage that deserves the best guardianship we can possibly provide.

Sincerely,

Beverly Tucker
President

(Cover image: composite photograph of Alexander-Withrow Building, c. 1970 and 2015)

Board of Directors 2015

Beverly Tucker
President

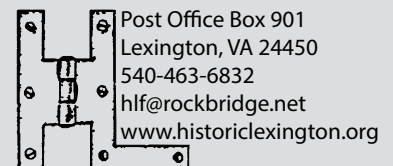
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Vice President

Peter Grover
Treasurer

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Arthur Bartenstein
Mary Stuart Gilliam
Dee Joyce-Hayes
Robert Keefe
Bruce Macdonald
Matt Paxton, Jr.
Gene Sullivan
Rick Wolf

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Pioneers in the Preservation Movement in Rockbridge County: HLF Turns 50

In 1972, Mr. M.W. Paxton, Jr. presented a paper in which he outlined the key people and events that culminated in the establishment of an organized movement for preservation in Rockbridge County. Fear of losing one of Lexington's most beautiful old homes prompted action on the part of concerned citizens. The house in question was Barclay House, now known as Beaumont, that had been purchased for razing by the Kappa Alpha National Fraternity.



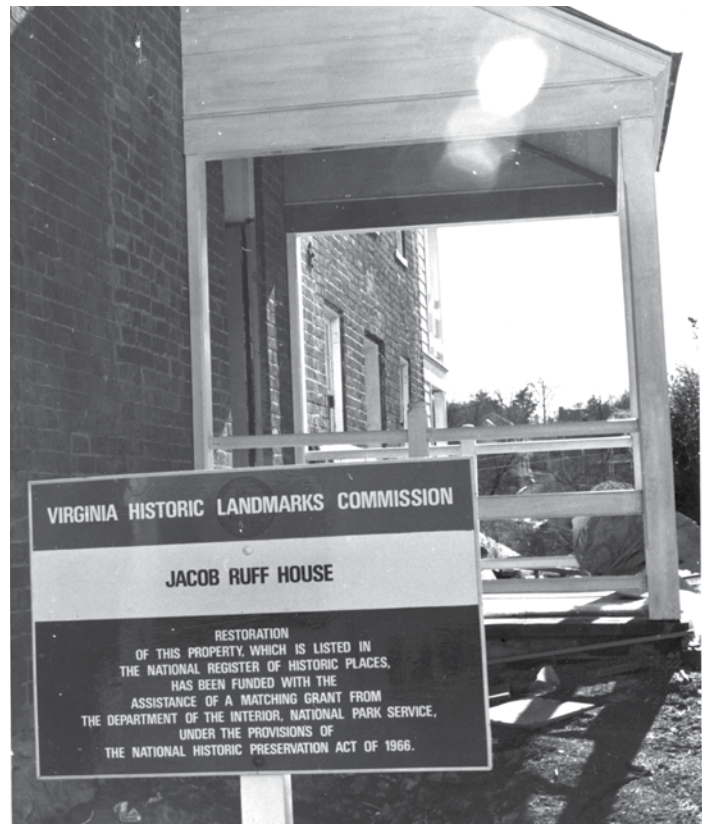
Robert Patterson, president of the Lee-Jackson Foundation, and Matt Paxton, Jr. meet to discuss HLF's purchase of the Davidson-Tucker House (1974)

Leaders in this movement were Mrs. B. McCluer Gilliam and Miss Louise Moore. The very first meeting was held in Miss Moore's home. Initial charter board members in addition to Mr. Paxton, Sr., Mrs. Gilliam, and Miss Moore were Mrs. J.P. Alexander, Mrs. E.V. Brush, N.D. Chapman, Col. Donald B. Clayton, Jr., Mrs. Cole Davis, Weir R. Goodwin, Mrs. A.L. Lancaster, Mrs. John Locher, Mrs. Hunter McClung, Dr. Robert Munger, Miss Mary Monroe Penick, Mrs. Paul Wells, and Royster Lyle.



Future site of Hopkins Green at the corner of W. Nelson and S. Jefferson Streets

Just when it appeared that no agreement could be reached to save Barclay, Col. and Mrs. C.C. Tutwiler made an offer to purchase the property and Barclay was saved, but there was more work to do. The local branch of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA) proposed the formation of Historic Lexington Foundation, an organization designed to legally purchase properties, something the APVA branch could not do. Mr. M.W. Paxton, Sr. drafted a charter that was issued September 26, 1966. Royster Lyle became its first chairman. In October, Col. Clayton was elected president and Mr. Lyle vice-president with

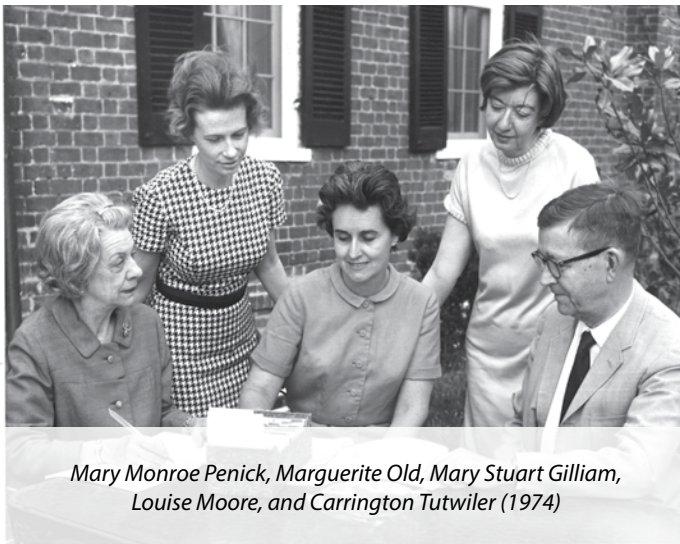


Restoration begins on the Jacob Ruff House on N. Main Street (1974)

Miss Louise Moore secretary-treasurer. Others added to the board were Mrs. M.D. Campbell, Jr., Miss Mary Monroe Penick, Mrs. William Old, and Col. Kenneth Purdie. The group presented the need for a historic zoning ordinance, which was later implemented by City Council. The first project to be adopted was the Alexander-Withrow Building, which was purchased and successfully restored.

These were challenging times through which Col. Clayton guided the foundation. The presidential helm was then turned

over to Mrs. Gilliam, during which time the foundation turned its attention to other properties. A fund raising dinner was held in Moody Hall at Virginia Military Institute and was the successful beginning of a Revolving Fund, which was to finance many future projects. With original members Paxton, Jr., and Gilliam once again on the HLF board in 2015, still advising in 2016, we will return to Moody Hall for a key anniversary celebration these fifty years later. Many outstanding people have taken their place in the HLF story, notably Pamela Simpson whose dedication to preservation was a standard to be recognized for its excellence. We do indeed stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us and what strong shoulders they were. We have been fortunate and now it is our turn to carry on.



Mary Monroe Penick, Marguerite Old, Mary Stuart Gilliam, Louise Moore, and Carrington Tutwiler (1974)



*Central Hotel
(c. 1970)*



Alexander-Withrow Building c. 1970



*Pam Simpson and colleague monitor work on Jacob Ruff House
(1974)*

The Architecture of Historic Rockbridge Receives Rave Reviews

“I’ve been waiting for this book for almost 40 years,” exclaimed an ecstatic customer as author Dan Pezzoni signed her copy of *The Architecture of Historic Rockbridge*. She was referring to Historic Lexington Foundation’s 1977 publication of *The Architecture of Historic Lexington* by Royster Lyle and Pamela Simpson. HLF had always hoped to publish a companion book on Rockbridge County’s architecture, but other commitments intervened. Until now.

When *The Architecture of Historic Rockbridge* became available in November 2015, HLF launched a series of book signings in Lexington. The first was held at the Francis H. Smith House, a special event for sponsors of the book’s publication. A week later another book signing took place, this time at the Sigma Nu Headquarters, for those who had pre-purchased books as early as last summer. The third signing, at Ravenhorst Associates on Main Street, saw shoppers take advantage of the offer of free gift wrapping, artfully provided by our president, Beverly Tucker.

November and December produced a flurry of activity as people rushed to purchase the book. HLF used social media (Twitter and Facebook) to publicize it. Feedback was very positive with posts proclaiming, “It’s the perfect Christmas gift” and “Just picked it up for my husband – he’ll love it.” From a Lexington B&B (Llewellen Lodge) came this note, “Four of our guests over the weekend were doing a mini-VMI family reunion and were very impressed with this well done and heavily researched work and plan to buy it.”

A more formal *Roanoke Times* review by George Kegley, editor of the *Journal of The Historical Society of Western Virginia*, begins: “Architectural historian Dan Pezzoni has written a splendid book about the rich architectural heritage of Rockbridge County from 18th-century structures up to current preservation efforts. This is a worthy companion volume to the fine *Architecture of Historic Lexington*.”

The *Roanoke Times* goes on to say “More than 300 handsome illustrations, at least half in color, portray the buildings described in detail. Pezzoni’s text blends the deep history of Rockbridge with the stories of the structures built during the last two and a half centuries. His book is arranged by themes: approaching buildings, styles, town and country, churches, schools, resorts, industries, automobile age, and preservation.”

Books are available at Lexington bookstores and museum shops and also available online at www.HistoricRockbridge.com.



Dan Pezzoni signs books at Sigma Nu National Fraternity



Book signing for sponsors on November 1, 2015, held in Lexington at the home of Gene and Nancy Sullivan. Photo from left: Lisa Tracy, Sue Van Leer, Dan Pezzoni, and Beverly Tucker



December book signing at Ravenhorst Associates

HLF Façade Grant Program Continues to Encourage Improvements in the Downtown

The partnership begun by Historic Lexington Foundation and the City of Lexington in 2013 fostered more building improvements in the downtown historic district in 2015. The Robert S. Johnson Façade Improvement Fund helped finance three façade improvement projects along Lexington's Nelson Street.

Anyone who ventured downtown this fall noticed an inviting change to the exterior of the Palms Restaurant at the corner of W. Nelson and S. Jefferson Streets. An HLF grant helped pay for the professional design work and color selection undertaken by Frazier and Associates of Staunton and repairs and repainting of the building's exterior.

The façade grant program also reimbursed R/C Theatres of Baltimore, the owners of the State Theatre on W. Nelson Street, for the repair and repainting of wood surfaces on the building's exterior. The building had undergone an extensive restoration in 2003 but was starting to see some wear and tear.

Additionally, a façade grant was provided to help the owner of 9 E. Nelson Street clean the building's façade and repaint wood and metal surfaces on the exterior. As part of the work, the metal cornice at the top of the building was scraped and painted. The work is particularly gratifying as the building sits at the eastern gateway of the downtown and is visible from the county courthouse.

Finally, expect to see work begin this year on 15 W. Washington Street. In December, a grant application was approved for window restoration, above-grade foundation repair, brick repointing, and façade repainting.

Property owners with buildings in the local historic district that are at least 50 years old may apply for a façade grant. Business owners may also apply if they have the permission of the owner of the building in which they reside. For purposes of the grant, a façade is defined as exterior wall surfaces, not including the building's roof. Among the categories of work eligible for grants are mortar repointing, window repair, gutter replacement, repainting of exterior surfaces, chimney repair and flashing, and cornice repair. Priority will be given to projects emphasizing proper preservation techniques and materials.



Prep work on State Theatre façade



The Palms Restaurant



9 East Nelson Street received façade grant in 2015

HLF Secures an Easement on Lexington Presbyterian Manse

On November 13, 2015, HLF concluded a Deed of Easement with the Lexington Presbyterian Church to protect in perpetuity the church manse. The manse was completed in 1848 on what is now White Street, named after the first occupant of the home, the Reverend William S. White (1800–1878). White became close friends with Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson during Jackson’s days at the Virginia Military Institute and would correspond with Jackson until the general’s death following the Battle of Chancellorsville.

HLF has used the mechanism of an easement since the foundation’s founding in 1966 to protect many historic properties in the downtown, including the Alexander-Withrow Building, the Dold Building, and the Jacob Ruff House. With the exception of the Hopkins House, where an HLF easement protects several of the home’s interior elements, HLF’s easements have been limited to the protection of the building’s façades.

The easement of the Lexington Presbyterian Church Manse marks a major departure from the past. The manse was constructed in the Gothic Revival style made popular by the well-known landscape architect of this period, Andrew Jackson Downing. He was a proponent of the Gothic cottage style,

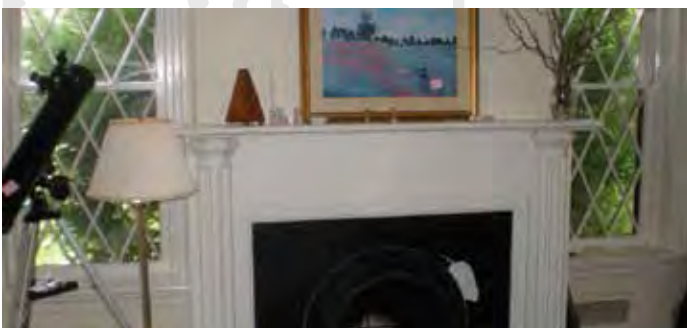
which appealed to the church, as the site of the manse was then on the very outskirts of Lexington.

The exterior of the house has many of the elements illustrated in Downing’s magazine, *The Horticulturalist*, including a steep roof with front gable and tall chimneys, bargeboards running along the edge of the roof and filial on top of the front gable. Similarly, the interior contains many elements associated with Gothic Revival, including diamond-shaped window panes, diamond-shaped raised door and cabinet panels, capitals and colonettes on the first floor mantels that imitate the octagonal columns on the front of the house.

Because of the critical importance of the interior elements, they are included in the easement protections in the agreement. As landscaping is also critical to Downing’s plans, there is also an element of protection in the agreement, specifically that no new structures can be built that are visible from White Street and that no significant, new landscape features may be added without the written approval of HLF.



Lexington Presbyterian Church Manse



Front parlor fireplace mantel



Front porch bay window

2015 Remembered in Photos



APRIL—Annual Meeting at Buffalo Forge



MAY—Preservation Month focuses on historic resorts in Rockbridge

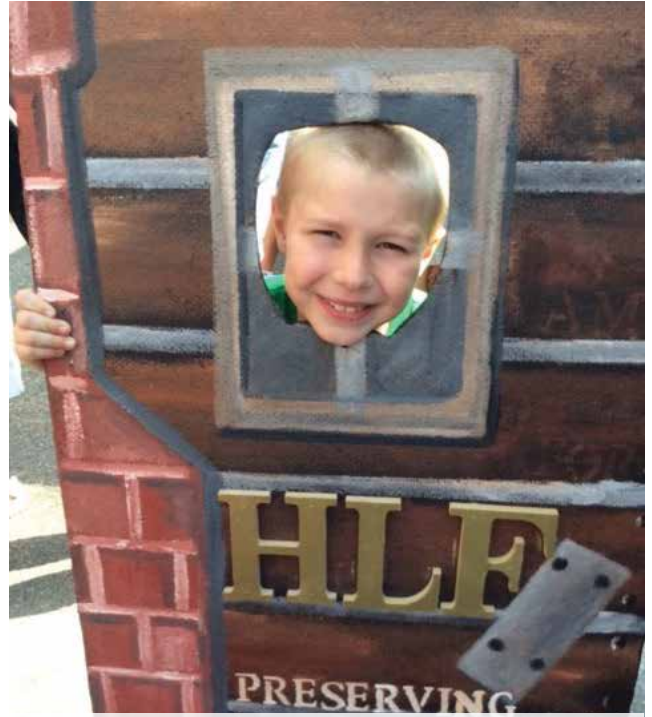


NOVEMBER—Book signing at the c. 1885 Francis Smith House.

Save The Date:

HLF Annual Meeting

April 9, 2016
Paxton House
Glen Maury Park



AUGUST—HLF booth in Rockbridge Community Festival

HLF Wishes To Give Special Thanks To

Ben and Carol Grigsby for their hospitality
and support of HLF with office space

Bob Keefe for layout and design of
The Architecture of Historic Rockbridge

Nancy and Gene Sullivan
Sigma Nu National Headquarters
and Ravenhorst Associates
for providing sites for book signings

Skip Ravenhorst for multiple
PowerPoint presentations of
the Rockbridge book

Dan Pezzoni for his presentation
on historic resorts during
Preservation Month