

# AT FIFTY

1966-2016



A half-century of historic preservation in Lexington and Rockbridge County



**Historic Lexington Foundation**



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in Lexington and Rockbridge County  
1966-2016

Anniversary Celebration

Moody Hall, Virginia Military Institute

November 4, 2016

## SAFEGUARDING THE PAST AS A LIVING PRESENCE

Published by Historic Lexington Foundation on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of its chartering and distributed to guests at the anniversary celebration in Moody Hall at Virginia Military Institute on November 4, 2016

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HLF gratefully acknowledges the generosity and support of Kappa Alpha Order. Its presence in this anniversary celebration brings us full circle in a relationship of mutual appreciation. KA likes to say that it was the catalyst for the founding of Historic Lexington Foundation. We agree. Thank you, Kappa Alpha.

AS WE BEGIN OUR CELEBRATION of the 50th anniversary of Historic Lexington Foundation, we find ourselves reflecting on those who showed us how to save our past and why that is of such value.

Our reflections would be incomplete without the early inspiration of those who forged the way of the preservation movement. An organized movement for preservation here in Rockbridge County began as early as the 1890s, when the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA) launched efforts to preserve the ruins of Old Monmouth Church and then, in the 1930s, the old covered bridge at East Lexington. In 1964, 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 a survey of other buildings, including the Alexander-Withrow House.

On September 26, 1966, the Virginia State Corporation Commission issued a charter to Historic Lexington Foundation (HLF). The early years were devoted to the purchase and restoration of significant historic structures. The Alexander-Withrow House restoration was financed through loans from United Virginia Bank/Rockbridge and the Rockbridge Historical Society. That was just the beginning of the preservation of such properties as Jacob Ruff House, Hopkins Green, Dold Building and many others.

The 50th Anniversary of HLF proudly cites the current programs, a centerpiece of which is the Façade Grant



Beverly Tucker. Photo by Ellen Martin.

Program that enables owners of buildings and businesses in the historic district to receive grants that allow Lexington to maintain its best.

HLF considers its major mission to be stewards of Rockbridge County’s historical treasures. We invite all who care to join in this celebration of our continuing efforts. Ours is a rich heritage which deserves the best safeguarding we can possibly provide. We salute our own early preservationists, who are honored on the page opposite.

Our reflection becomes our resolve.

— Beverly Tucker, HLF President

# IN APPRECIATION AND RECOGNITION

## HONOR ROLL OF PRESERVATIONISTS, 1964–71

Mrs. J. P. Alexander

Mrs. John Locher

Mrs. Edward V. Brush

Royster Lyle Jr.

Mrs. Malcolm D. Campbell Jr.

Mrs. Hunter McClung

Dabney Carver

Louise Pendleton Moore

N. D. Chapman

Dr. Robert Munger

Col. Donald B. Clayton Jr.

Mrs. William Old

Mrs. Cole Davis

Matthew W. Paxton Sr.

Richard R. Fletcher

Matthew W. Paxton Jr.

Mary M. Galt

Mary Monroe Penick

Frank Johnson Gilliam

Col. Kenneth Purdie

Mrs. B. McCluer Gilliam

R. P. Rodes

Weir R. Goodwin

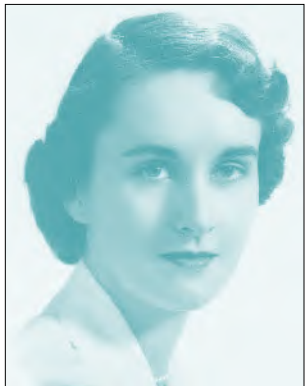
Carlson Thomas

Mrs. Albert L. Lancaster

Col. and Mrs. Carrington Cabell  
Tutwiler Jr.

Mrs. Arthur Lipscomb

Mrs. Paul Welles



Scarisbrook Abbott

Three prime movers in the creation of Historic Lexington Foundation:  
Mary Stuart (Mrs. B. McCluer) Gilliam, Louise Pendleton Moore and Matthew W. Paxton Jr.

## LYLE-SIMPSON PRESERVATION FUND

IN CELEBRATION OF ITS 50th anniversary, Historic Lexington Foundation proudly announces the establishment of the Lyle-Simpson Preservation Fund to encourage, through financial assistance, property owners to preserve architecturally and historically significant sites in Rockbridge County.

The preservation fund honors the memories of Royster Lyle Jr. and Pamela Hemenway Simpson, two inspired individuals who were critical to the historic preservation movement in Lexington and Rockbridge and to the success of HLF.

Lyle was a founder and leader of HLF in the 1960s and Simpson served as its president for several terms thereafter. Together they collaborated on *The Architecture of Historic Lexington*, first published by HLF in 1977 and still an invaluable resource 40 years later.

Lyle was instrumental in the 1971 creation of Lexington's downtown historic district. Simpson, with her Washington and Lee students as researchers, developed an archive of the city's older buildings. Each worked tirelessly to save important historic properties in the area: Lyle the Barclay House, Alexander-Withrow House, and McCampbell Inn and Simpson the Lyric Building and Holmes House.

Vigilant in safeguarding the architectural heritage of Rockbridge County, they made a lasting impact on their community. Through the Lyle-Simpson Preservation Fund, HLF pledges to continue their important work.



## THE ORIGINS OF HISTORIC LEXINGTON FOUNDATION

M. W. Paxton Jr.

WITH THE RECENT ENACTMENT of a historic zoning ordinance, historic preservation can be said to have come of age in Lexington. Individual preservation projects still face plenty of hurdles, but there now seems to be a growing acceptance here of the idea that preserving the community's architectural heritage is good for economic as well as aesthetic reasons.

An organized movement for preservation here began with the reactivation of the Rockbridge Branch of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities in March 1964.

An APVA branch had been active here as early as the 1890s when efforts were made to preserve [the ruins of] Old Monmouth Church<sup>1</sup> and again in the 1930s when it was concerned primarily with the unsuccessful effort to save the old covered bridge at East Lexington.<sup>2</sup> Also doomed to failure were efforts to save the Blue Hotel and several other distinctive local architectural landmarks.

But in the middle 1960s the climate for preservation was better. Scarcely anyone in Virginia was unfamiliar with the Williamsburg restorations and many had been greatly impressed by the architectural gems successfully preserved in Savannah, Charleston, Georgetown and Old Salem.

A spark that helped rekindle the APVA here was a fairly innocent-looking announcement in the local newspaper February 5, 1964, that Kappa Alpha national fraternity had purchased the Barclay property on

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Originally entitled "Preservation Profile" and presented to the Fortnightly Club in February 1972. Mr. Paxton, a founder of Historic Lexington Foundation, is the former publisher and editor of *The Lexington News-Gazette*. Valedictorian of his graduating class at Washington and Lee in 1949, he earned a graduate degree from the Columbia School of Journalism.

Lee Avenue and would move its national headquarters to Lexington.\* The fraternity planned to raze the house on the property and erect a “classical-style” office building on the site.

Prime movers in the APVA revival were Mrs. B. McCluer Gilliam and Miss Louise Moore and the initial meeting in March 1964 with APVA officials from Richmond was held at Miss Moore’s house.

Because the two prime movers were reticent about presiding at meetings, they prevailed on the writer to accept the title of “director” of the local branch and as co-secretaries they were the main-springs of the organization.<sup>3</sup>

A letter was sent out and the chapter soon had more than 100 members. The letter listed four purposes of the group:

1. “To encourage restoration and preservation of buildings reflecting the history and architecture of Rockbridge County . . . .
2. “To make a thorough study of those buildings which should be preserved and to complete a survey which has been undertaken by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.
3. “To encourage public interest in and appreciation of the fine old buildings of the town and county.
4. “To arouse public concern for the appearance of our town . . . .”

The letter noted several buildings “which deserve our immediate concern,” including the Barclay House and the Alexander-Withrow House.

Initial chapter board members, in addition to the three mentioned above, were Mrs. J. P. Alexander, Mrs. E. V. Brush, N. D. Chapman, Col. Donald B. Clayton Jr., Mrs. Cole Davis, Miss Mary M. Galt, Weir R. Goodwin, Mrs. A. L. Lancaster, Mrs. John Locher, Mrs. Hunter McClung, Dr. Robert Munger, Miss Mary Monroe Penick and Mrs. Paul Welles.<sup>4</sup>

The local chapter immediately began a survey of buildings and completed the research necessary to have them entered in the Historic American Buildings Survey, of the Department of the Interior, which is housed in the Library of Congress.<sup>5</sup> The quality of this work, directed by Mrs. Gilliam, was praised by preservation officials.

\* From Atlanta

The Barclay House on Lee Avenue, known as Beaumont. Its threatened demolition in the mid-1960s led to creation of the Rockbridge area’s modern preservation movement. Photo courtesy of Sally Mann.



Later, arrangements were made through the APVA to have a photographic specialist from the National Park Service photograph a number of noteworthy buildings in the area for the Library of Congress files.<sup>6</sup>

Measured drawings of some of these same buildings were subsequently done under the auspices of the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission and the University of Virginia School of Architecture.<sup>7</sup>

The APVA compiled a walking tour folder in which architecturally interesting buildings were noted. This tour has been a popular feature at the local chamber of commerce office.

But the real nuts and bolts of preservation is the saving of buildings from destruction.

The APVA’s fight to save the Barclay House was a dramatic story with a happy ending.

On the day the newspaper announced the purchase by Kappa Alpha, Colonel Clayton, an organizer of the APVA, wrote Henry J. Foresman, a member of the KA National Executive Council, enclosing sketch plans for remodeling the property. Colonel Clayton, who had lived for a time in the Barclay House, said that aside from sentimental or historical considerations he believed remodeling the existing building “would result in substantial savings for the Council.”<sup>8</sup>

Several months later, on June 11, Paul Speake, a Birmingham, Ala., architect and Tom Paulson of Richmond, Calif., members of the KA Council, made a visit to Lexington, and Colonel Clayton, who had known Mr. Speake in Birmingham, conducted the visitors through the Barclay House.

The visit was followed up by a letter from the APVA to Mr. Speake which noted that one of the reasons for the formation of the APVA chapter was “an interest in preserving the Barclay House which occupies a strategic position on what is probably the town’s finest street.”

The letter continued, “We feel also that KA has a wonderful opportunity here to set an example which can in the future be pointed to by those interested in preserving the attractive flavor of this old town.”<sup>9</sup>

Bad news came back July 22 in a letter from Speake saying that it had been the Executive Council’s decision at its recent meeting that it would “not be practical for us to restore or convert” the existing building. “From our standpoint there are many reasons why a 100-year-old non-fireproof residence does not meet our requirements.”<sup>10</sup>

A letter from the APVA to Mr. Speake on July 31 expressed “keen disappointment” and suggested that Kappa Alpha Order had “placed itself in the position of having quite a public relations job to do in Lexington.”<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, other options for the fraternity were being explored. Mr. Foresman had inquired about the availability of Col Alto, but an inquiry from the APVA had brought a definite reply from Washington and Lee University President Fred C. Cole that the University was not interested in selling that property. The APVA director mentioned to Mr. Foresman that if any alternate proposal could be developed for a site, “I believe we have a buyer who wants to restore the Barclay property.”<sup>12</sup>

Bishop Lloyd Craighill, a member of Alpha Chapter of KA, wrote Mr. Speake urging that at least the facade of the Barclay House be restored.<sup>13</sup> A poem by former Lexingtonian Laura Burks Alnutt expressing sadness over the destruction of the house was published in *The News-Gazette* editorial columns on Aug. 12.<sup>14</sup>

In a letter Aug. 24 to the APVA Mr. Speake wrote, “It is distressing to find ourselves most unintentionally giving offense to you and others in Lexington. My personal wish is that someone might come forward with an offer to buy the place for preservation.” But he hastened to add that he had no authority to offer it for sale.<sup>15</sup>

The APVA replied (on August 28): “Those of us who would like to see the house preserved are making every effort in a quiet way to find another equally suitable site” for KA.<sup>16</sup>

Both sides in the conflict appeared exhausted and the correspondence ceased until another innocent-looking publication rallied the forces of the preservationists.

The local newspaper published, on Jan. 13, 1965, an architect’s sketch of the low profile structure which was to be the KA national headquarters. The picture caption said ground breaking exercises were planned for Aug. 27 during the national fraternity’s 100th anniversary convention.<sup>17</sup>

Correspondence resumed, and William E. Forester, executive secretary of Kappa Alpha Order wrote on Feb. 8 inviting the director of the local APVA chapter and two other Lexington citizens of his choosing to meet with the KA Executive Council in Washington for lunch on Saturday, March 6. The time from 12:30 to 3:00 was to be reserved for discussion with the Lexington delegation.<sup>18</sup>

The APVA delegation, consisting of the director and Royster Lyle, presented the case for preservation to the full Kappa Alpha Council.

The fraternity was urged to come here and set up its offices for the time being in the Barclay House, spending the minimum to adapt it to their needs.

They were invited to get their feet on the ground in Lexington, bring the delegates to their 100th anniversary convention here and show them “that charming old house and get their reaction to it; to get some people who are really specialists in restoration to go over the place and see if you have something there really worth salvaging.”

It was pointed out that since the national fraternity also owned the Reid-White House\*, it actually controlled the finest block of houses in Lexington. All four houses on the west side of the block, it was noted, “forming a harmonious unit, were here on the scene at the time of your founding. They formed a center of social life in the town and undoubtedly many interesting historical associations could be found to relate them to your founding.”

Throwing up a challenge to the fraternity officials, the local spokesmen declared that “Sigma Nu in coming to Lexington had only a rock . . . and a yellow rose bush,” but they had “fully capitalized on these meager historical resources.”

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\* Now known as the Reid-White-Philbin House



The Reid-White House, another of the historic residences on Lee Avenue. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Getting maybe a bit carried away as he warmed to his subject, the APVA director suggested that there was the possibility of getting the City Council to name the block where the KA properties were located Kappa Alpha Square in gratitude for a landmark restoration project.<sup>19</sup>

Mr. Lyle told the Council about a report on tourism being prepared for the local chamber of commerce by Thomas G. McCaskey, vice president of Colonial Williamsburg. The comment on the Barclay House in the McCaskey report was strong, too strong to be quoted verbatim to the fraternity council.

The travel expert had urged the chamber to “take a firm stand on the destruction of a beautiful old house on Lee Street by the Kappa Alpha Fraternity. The west side of this street, filled with stately homes, set well back on wide green lawns, is one of the jewels of Lexington. Every civic-minded person in the area should be enlisted to demand that the national headquarters of KA either use a conforming structure or build elsewhere. It is a disgrace, if not an affront to the pride of Lexington to allow the planned desecration to proceed,” he wrote.<sup>20</sup>

On the basis of the discussion in Washington, the APVA group was sufficiently encouraged to write the National Trust for Historic Preservation asking for names of persons who could do an architectural study of the Barclay House and inquiring whether the National Trust could do anything to make such a study financially attractive to the fraternity officials.<sup>21</sup>

The official action of the KA Council in Washington was soon reported to the local APVA group by Richard Feller, a dominant member of the council and treasurer of the fraternity’s housing corporation.

In a letter dated March 19 he wrote that:

- There would be no demolition of the Barclay House before the Council’s meeting in June.
- The fraternity would be willing to consider an offer to purchase the property for the full cost they had invested in it.
- Until June, their willingness to consider any such offer was predicated upon the availability of an “equally desirable” alternate site in Lexington.<sup>22</sup>

However, in a personal letter a few days later to the APVA director, Mr. Feller made his position clear, when he wrote, “If you and those in Lexington who share your views about our headquarters persist in forcing us to study a use of the present Barclay House, then I fear it may be the ultimate straw that breaks the camel’s back . . . I frankly feel that the chances are now just 50-50 that Kappa Alpha will ever erect a headquarters site in Lexington.

“I would hope you will choose to mold opinion so that we can proceed unimpeded on our chosen present course of action.”<sup>23</sup>

In similar vein he wrote Mr. Lyle, who had offered to assist the fraternity with its public relations efforts, “the greatest public relations assistance you could offer KA today would be to influence opinion to let us proceed as planned on the Barclay site. Without this I fear the whole project may be in jeopardy.”<sup>24</sup>

The APVA advised Mr. Feller March 26 that the fraternity might want to take another look at a site that had been previously rejected. The property referred to was a tract owned by the late Dr. Howard Mitchell across Rt. 60 from Liberty Hall, where, it had been announced, W&L was studying the possibility of developing a companion college campus.<sup>25</sup>

A quick reply came back from Mr. Feller, “We would not give any consideration to another site unless we had a bona fide offer for purchase of the Barclay property.”<sup>26</sup>

Unwilling to give up the idea that KA might be induced to restore the Barclay House, the APVA branch had been advised by the National Trust that help might be obtained from J. Everette Fauber of Lynchburg, Virginia, Preservation Officer for the American Institute of Architects.

Mr. Fauber graciously offered his help. He visited Lexington as the guest of Col. and Mrs. B. McCluer Gilliam, inspected the Barclay property and prepared, at no cost to the APVA, a proposal, with sketches, for adaptation of the property for the national headquarters of Kappa Alpha.

The Fauber report was received the first week in May<sup>27</sup> and the same week two other big salvos were fired in the preservation battle.

General Lemuel Shepherd had been conducted on a tour of the Barclay property by James R. Gilliam and B. McCluer Gilliam, both KAs. The former Marine Corps commandant, who was also honorary chairman of the campaign for the new KA national headquarters, wrote fraternity officials in early May, “I am fully in accord with protests being voiced by the citizens of Lexington.”<sup>28</sup>

And that same week Robert R. Garvey Jr., executive director of the National Trust, wrote Dr. John Nowell, KA president, advising him that the four houses on Lee Avenue had been accepted for inclusion at the Library of Congress in the Historic American Buildings Survey.<sup>29</sup>

Mr. Feller’s response to Mr. Fauber’s plans were that “they are not satisfactory to me personally.

“There are two reasons why I do not accept and doubt that I ever will be able to accept his proposals,” he wrote.

“First . . . we are interested in a strictly utilitarian office . . . in a one floor structure.

“Secondly, as a builder no one can possibly tell me that it is not considerably more expensive to remodel, renovate or restore an old property than it is to start from the ground and build a new one.

“I am certain we could never raise the money to restore an old property. Furthermore, I personally am completely opposed to it.”<sup>30</sup> There matters stood.

There was no groundbreaking ceremony at the centennial convention in August of that year.

It was then that Col. and Mrs. C. C. Tutwiler came forward on Sept. 10 with their offer to purchase the Barclay property.<sup>31</sup> The KA council decided to go ahead and sell the property even though they had not found another site in Lexington to their liking.

Consummation of the sale was reported in the local newspaper March 23, 1966. In announcing the sale a spokesman for the fraternity said it would ensure the preservation and restoration of the 130-year-old residence. The Tutwilers announced that they had retained Mr. Fauber as architect for the restoration.<sup>32</sup>

Subsequently Kappa Alpha purchased the Mitchell property, but fraternities have fallen upon lean years and the headquarters project has never materialized.\*

Even before the sale of the Barclay House it was announced that the APVA board was advising its membership in late 1965 of its concern about the future of the Alexander-Withrow House.<sup>33</sup>

Long tied up in an unsettled estate, this strategic and unique building at the corner of Main and Washington was deteriorating from neglect.

It was felt that a new approach was needed to assure its preservation. The local APVA discussed the possibility of forming a non-profit foundation to purchase the Alexander-Withrow House, as attorneys had indicated it would be sold when the estate was settled.

The actual organization of Historic Lexington Foundation was initiated by the local Chamber of Commerce after the completion of the tourist study by McCaskey. As a member of the chamber board, Mr. Lyle proposed its formation, and he was appointed chairman of the organization committee. Other members named to serve with him were R. P. Rodes and Dabney Carver.<sup>34</sup>

The Committee obtained copies of the charter and bylaws of Historic Richmond Foundation as models.<sup>35</sup>

The APVA branch was the nurturing group for the new foundation, in spite of the fact that the state APVA was opposed to the idea. It had been determined that local branches of the APVA could not own property outright, but that all APVA property was owned by the state organization with the various properties being managed by the local branches. The local APVA board did not feel that this policy gave them

\* In 1986, Kappa Alpha did move its headquarters to Lexington, initially occupying space in the former county jail but moving in 2004 to Mulberry Hill, a 200-year-old, late Georgian-style mansion at the west edge of town, abutting the Washington and Lee campus.

the flexibility needed in dealing with the situation presented by the Alexander-Withrow House.

At a meeting of the local APVA board May 4, 1966, it was determined that Historic Lexington Foundation should be an organization to acquire property and that the APVA would continue to promote research and arouse interest in buildings of historical and architectural importance.<sup>36</sup>

A charter for the foundation was drafted by M. W. Paxton Sr., and on Sept. 26, 1966, the State Corporation Commission issued a charter to Historic Lexington Foundation. The incorporators listed were D. B. Clayton Jr., Royster Lyle Jr. and Carrington C. Tutwiler Jr.

The purposes of the charitable, non-profit organization were listed in the charter as:

“To acquire and preserve houses, buildings, monuments, sites and objects in and around the City of Lexington that are connected with or illustrative of the history and culture of Lexington and Rockbridge County; to encourage and assist others to do likewise; to receive gifts for such purposes; to sell, mortgage, lease or transfer the property of the corporation, and, in general to be an educational institution to educate the people of Lexington and elsewhere in knowledge and understanding of history, architecture, and culture.”<sup>37</sup>

At the organizational meeting of the foundation, held Oct. 10, 1966, Colonel Clayton was elected president, Mr. Lyle vice president and Miss Louise Moore secretary-treasurer. Other directors named in the charter to serve for the first year of the corporation were Col. C. C. Tutwiler, Mrs. B. McCluer Gilliam, Frank J. Gilliam and M. W. Paxton Jr.<sup>38</sup>

Others subsequently added to the board were Mrs. M. D. Campbell Jr., who succeeded Miss Moore as secretary, Miss Mary Monroe Penick, Mrs. William W. Old and Col. Kenneth Purdie.

At one of the board's first meetings the group put itself on record favoring historic zoning of a specific area in Lexington. The group began discussion of the need for a historic zoning ordinance which it was later to shepherd through to final implementation by City Council.<sup>39</sup>

In the spring of 1967 the foundation announced the formation of a 21-member advisory board.<sup>40</sup> The enthusiasm of that group was indicated by comments in some of the letters of acceptance.

Wrote Martin P. Burks of Roanoke, general counsel of the N&W Railroad, “Lexington is an old and continuing love of mine”; Frank McCarthy replied from Hollywood, “congratulations on this forward step”; Thomas McCaskey wrote from Williamsburg, “creation of this organization is very welcome news . . . it will be my privilege to work with you”; former Gov. Price Daniel of Texas noted, “my family and I have a strong attachment to Lexington”; and Mrs. John Bocoock of Richmond, a leading preservationist, observed, “if . . . people I admire there founded a Society for the Prevention of Fleas on Our Dogs, I would want to be a part of it . . . Thank you for preserving every brick and stone.”<sup>41</sup>

Following the publication that year of a brochure and its distribution to a list of persons believed to be interested in preservation, the foundation reported at the end of 1967 that it had received contributions totaling \$5,363. Support for the foundation was almost evenly divided between 61 contributors from the Lexington area and 55 contributors from other places.<sup>42</sup>

At the board meeting in February 1968, the foundation decided to zero in on the block on Main Street between Washington and Henry Streets and on the old block of Washington Street. A particular eye was being kept on the Alexander-Withrow House, still deeply enmeshed in legal red tape.<sup>43</sup>

The first of three successful fall heritage house tours was held by the foundation on Oct. 12, 1968 with 650 people visiting nine old houses in the town and county. The venture, spearheaded by a committee including Miss Louise Moore, Mrs. B. M. Gilliam, Miss M. M. Penick and Mrs. W. W. Old, netted \$1,800 and focused considerable public attention on the foundation.<sup>44</sup>

At its annual meeting in January 1969, the foundation could report total resources of about \$15,000, including \$2,000 in pledges.<sup>45</sup>

The first word of a break in the long hang-up in the sale of the Alexander-Withrow House, came in March of that year when Henry J. Foresman, court-appointed commissioner, told foundation officials that he hoped to get the circuit court to agree to sell the property at an early date, provided agreement could be obtained from a Bedford lawyer representing some of the many heirs.<sup>46</sup> Not the least of the problems with the settlement of the estate had been the fact that a previously appointed commissioner had been sent up for embezzlement.



The Alexander-Withrow House at the northwest corner of Washington and Main Streets, after restoration. Note the distinctive diamond-shaped brick pattern. Photo courtesy of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Judge Paul A. Holstein disqualified himself from handling the matter and Judge Glynn R. Phillips of Dickinson County was appointed to hear the case. HLF submitted a bid of \$26,000 for the Withrow property, which included the Alexander-Withrow House and the adjoining Emily Shop building. At the judge's request for a breakdown, the foundation offered bids of \$18,000 for the house and \$8,000 for the shop.<sup>47</sup>

However, after private offers had been solicited, the judge changed the ground rules and, over the objection of the foundation, decreed that the sale should be made by sealed bids, to be received by December 5, 1969.

Colonel Clayton, who with the foundation's attorney, Paul Penick, was handling the negotiations for the foundation, was directed by the HLF board to use his discretion on buying the Emily Shop, but to make an all-out effort to purchase the Alexander-Withrow House, as this historic building was considered the keystone of the foundation's whole program.<sup>48</sup>

Suspense mounted as the long-awaited date of the sale drew near. Colonel Clayton presented the foundation's position to the judge and urged him to go back to the original plan of selling the property at private auction, or, if he felt he must proceed with sealed bids, to allow all interested parties to submit additional bids after the sealed bids were opened.<sup>49</sup>

December 5 arrived and the foundation had the thrill of bidding on its first piece of property at the \$18,000 figure originally proposed.

Mr. and Mrs. Roland Fifer, who operate the Emily Shop, submitted the high bid of \$9,200 for the building their shop occupies.

The foundation did not push up the bidding on that property but, nonetheless, attained its objectives by negotiating with the Fifers for deed restrictions on their property. They agreed to keep their building architecturally essentially as it now stands. The east wall of the building fronting on the courtyard of the Alexander-Withrow House is to remain unchanged, with no paint or signs to be applied to it.<sup>50</sup>

The foundation negotiated loans of \$14,687.50 from the United Virginia Bank/Rockbridge and \$2,100 from the Rockbridge Historical Society to finance the purchase, retaining its savings certificates as working capital for the restoration of the exterior of the Alexander-Withrow House.<sup>51</sup>

At the foundation board meeting celebrating the purchase, it was agreed that as the method of handling this first property would be subject to close scrutiny and would influence future support from the public, the services of a competent architectural adviser should be obtained at once.<sup>52</sup>

Thomas W. S. Craven of the Charlottesville architectural firm of Johnson, Craven and Gibson was called in. He visited the property on a bitterly cold January day and proposed that restoration work be done in three phases.

The first included cleaning the premises, repairing the roof, exterior woodwork and windows, repointing chimneys and masonry walls, painting exterior woodwork and replacement of the existing high board fence.

In the second phase he proposed that work be done to improve the appearance of the porch and the ground floor. The final phase would be restoration of the interior.

At its annual meeting Jan. 27, 1970, the board voted to retain Mr. Craven and to obtain the services of W. W. Coffey & Son, a general contractor who had done considerable restoration work in the area.<sup>53</sup>

At this meeting the board also set a course similar to that of Richmond and Savannah preservationists. It began discussion of listing the property for sale with deed restrictions to assure its preservation, so that a revolving fund could be started for further restoration projects.

Colonel Clayton, who had guided the foundation through the critical period culminating in purchase of the Alexander-Withrow House, was succeeded as president by Mrs. B. McCluer Gilliam.

The new president initiated regular monthly board meetings and placed each board member in charge of one aspect of the foundation's program.

At the next meeting Mr. Lyle presented a diagram of the block of Main between Washington and Henry showing the status of each building — namely, sympathetic owner, building in danger, property for sale. It indicated the priority which the foundation might give to acquiring each property. This report was a key factor in giving direction to the group's efforts.<sup>54</sup>

In March 1970, Colonel Tutwiler, chairman for finance, outlined plans for a fund campaign with a goal of \$25,000. One hundred solicitors and other interested persons were to be invited to a kickoff dinner in Moody Hall at Virginia Military Institute in May. It was decided that donors of \$1,000 or more should be designated "Friends of Lexington" and that their names were to be listed on a plaque.

Work on the Alexander-Withrow House was progressing well and the board decided to proceed with phase two, which would complete the exterior restoration of the building and, it was felt, make it a more salable commodity. Plans were to be provided by Craven.<sup>55</sup>

On May 6 Colonel Tutwiler reported that the campaign was off to an excellent start with more than \$18,000 given or pledged. A report on, June 12 showed the drive well over its goal with gifts in excess of \$30,000.<sup>56</sup>

That summer, as work neared completion on its first property, the foundation turned its attention to the Central Hotel, a key building on Main Street and one in precarious condition. In September the Alexander-Withrow House was listed for sale with the local real estate board and in October John W. Brown, who was, incidentally a tenant of the foundation's with his Family Shoe Store in the Alexander-Withrow House, agreed to give HLF an option to purchase the Central Hotel when an existing option expired in November.<sup>57</sup>

On Nov. 20 Mrs. Gilliam announced receipt of a \$500 grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to help pay for architectural services on the Alexander-Withrow House.

It was also reported at that time that the Sheltered Workshop was a possible tenant for the unoccupied C & O Railway station. Officials of the railroad had indicated early that year that they might like to deed the Lexington station to the foundation. This building had been of interest to HLF after several preservation authorities had visited Lexington and expressed enthusiasm about it as an architectural landmark.<sup>58</sup> The station ultimately went to W&L but the foundation remains interested in its preservation.

The final HLF board meeting of 1970 brought a report from Colonel Clayton that he had signed a six-month option giving the foundation the opportunity to buy the Central Hotel for \$22,000.<sup>59</sup>

A position paper presented by Colonel Tutwiler concluded that purchase of the old hotel was feasible, but expenditure of funds for its restoration did not appear justifiable until the Alexander-Withrow House was sold.<sup>60</sup>

Early the next year the foundation was busy preparing deed restrictions to apply to the sale of the Alexander-Withrow House. Samples had been obtained from Savannah, Charleston and Winston-Salem and were being studied by Professor Lewis LaRue of the W&L law school.<sup>61</sup>

A hearing was coming up April 1 on a comprehensive revision of the city's zoning code. The foundation board decided not to push for inclusion of a historic zone at that time, but to submit a letter calling for implementation of historic zoning at an early date thereafter. This tactic proved wise, for the zoning revision became a center of hot controversy.<sup>62</sup>

Events moved swiftly in the next several months.



Central Hotel.  
Photo courtesy of Sally Mann.

On April 4 Mrs. Gilliam announced to the board that the foundation had received the first Mary Mason Anderson Williams Award from the APVA for outstanding preservation work. It carried a cash prize of \$250. Also at that meeting Colonel Clayton reported that local builder Carlson Thomas had offered to buy the Alexander-Withrow House at the price the foundation was asking. He was authorized to act as agent for the sale.<sup>63</sup>

The next week he was able to report to the board that the property had been sold for \$45,000, which enabled the foundation to recover its full investment. Meanwhile, the city tax assessor had been alert to the increase in tax base caused by the foundation's improvements, and had raised the assessment on the property. Mr. Thomas agreed to the deed restrictions proposed by the foundation, with a few minor revisions.<sup>64</sup> The major restriction provided that no alteration could be made to the external appearance of the building without the written approval of Historic Lexington Foundation.<sup>65</sup>

The next month the foundation board voted, on Mr. Lyle's motion, to exercise its option to purchase the Central Hotel. Mr. Craven had been retained as consulting architect on the building and had given his opinion that the hotel was worth preserving.<sup>66</sup> But the foundation was able to obtain insurance only at a very high premium until certain repair work could be done on the wiring and stove hood in the Central Lunch, on the ground floor of the building.<sup>67</sup>

On June 16 Mr. Lyle submitted to the board a 28-page study embodying exhaustive research on the history of the Central Hotel property.<sup>68</sup> Through an ingenious procedure he was able to estimate very accurately the date of construction of the middle portion of the building, which is the oldest part.

The title to the property was traced back to its original purchase from the town trustees in 1786. The tax records in the court house showed that shortly after the property was bought in 1809 by John McCampbell and his wife from Andrew Reid, the taxes on it increased. It was sold again several years later and there was another jump in taxes in 1816.

There remained the question 'of whether the oldest part of the present structure dates from 1809, 1816 or some subsequent date.

Examining old insurance records at the Virginia State Library, Mr. Lyle found a policy dated 1812 in the name of John McCampbell's heirs. It described the location of McCampbell's house and gave its measurements. The interior measurements of the middle portion of the Central Hotel were checked and were found to conform exactly with those of the 1812 insurance policy. So the date of the building can be placed very close to McCampbell's tax hike in 1809.<sup>69</sup>

Restoration of the hotel was started, but the debris and filth in the upper floors were so bad that Mr. Coffey's men would not work there until the exterminators were brought in.

Repair of the roof was the major job, as it had been virtually destroyed by a fire half a dozen years before. Until that repair was done it was thought best not to remove mattresses and other debris in the building which soaked up the rain and prevented its leaking through to the occupied ground floor.

Below the roof the building was found to be remarkably sound. Mr. Craven had recommended retention of the double verandas on the rear and north sides of the structure. They had been added about 1910 when the building became a hotel. A number of excrescences on the rear verandas had to be removed as well as an ugly little stucco addition on the north end. Removal of this was accomplished through the cooperation of James E. Burch, owner of the Central Lunch.

Mr. Craven presented on June 24 a three-phase plan for restoration work.

Phase one was to include cleanup and basic repairs. An old brick kitchen building behind the hotel was found by Craven to be beyond repair and was removed.

Phase two was to include improvements to the front to restore it more nearly to its original appearance and the development of a landscaped parking lot on the foundation's property behind the hotel. A plan later submitted by Craven provided for parking for 15 cars.

The third phase of work was to be development of the interior of the building.<sup>70</sup>

As work began on the Central Hotel, the owners of an old building across the street were defacing their property by replacing the double-hung wood windows with metal windows which didn't even fit the brick openings.

The foundation realized anew that its work could be fully effective only if backed up by historic zoning.

On July 9 Mr. Lyle distributed to the board copies of a "historic area" zoning proposal prepared by a committee of the City Planning Commission, of which he is a member.<sup>71</sup> This ordinance was adopted by City Council Oct. 21 after a public hearing at which no opposition was expressed. Its major provision is that proposals to alter the exteriors of buildings in an area within the original corporate limits of the town must be submitted to the City Planning Commission which must issue a "certificate of appropriateness" before work can proceed.<sup>72</sup>

Though greatly encouraged by this milestone legislation, the foundation still faces the major test of finding a suitable buyer for the Central Hotel property so that it can once again put its revolving fund to work.

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6. Royster Lyle, Memo to APVA Members, Feb. 14, 1969, APVA papers.
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9. Paxton to Paul Speake, June 19, 1964, Barclay House file.
10. Speake to Clayton, July 22, 1964, Barclay House file.

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14. Laura Burks Alnutt, *The News-Gazette*, Aug. 12, 1964.
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17. *The News-Gazette*, Jan. 13, 1965.
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20. Thomas G. McCaskey, report on tourism compiled for Lexington-Rockbridge Chamber of Commerce, page 14 (published in *The News-Gazette* May 12, 1965).
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27. J. Everette Fauber, report prepared for APVA, May 4, 1965, Barclay House file.
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36. Minutes, Rockbridge APVA Branch, May 4, 1966.
37. *The News-Gazette*, Sept. 28, 1966.
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40. *The News-Gazette*, April 1966.
41. Martin P. Burks to Clayton, Jan. 17, 1967; Frank McCarthy to Clayton, Jan. 20, 1967; Thomas McCaskey to Clayton, Jan. 17, 1967; Price Daniel to Clayton (quoted from *The News-Gazette*, letter not found); Elizabeth S. Bocock to Clayton, Jan. 21, 1967, HLF papers.
42. *The News-Gazette*, Dec. 6, 1967.
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56. Minutes, HLF, May 6, 1970, June 12, 1970.
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58. Minutes, HLF, Nov. 20, 1970.
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63. Minutes, HLF, April 4, 1971.
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67. Minutes, HLF, June 11, 1971.
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69. Royster Lyle, “A Planning Study for the Central Hotel, June 1971”; additional information supplied verbally by Lyle.
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72. Article 15, “Historic Area,” Lexington City Zoning Code.

## FIFTY YEARS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

*“Standing where it does, its loss would be irreparable. Its removal would be like a gaping tooth. A landmark has sentimental value as well as architectural. Such landmarks are an asset anywhere, especially in Lexington, whose only asset is ‘atmosphere.’ What makes atmosphere but the presence of buildings such as this?”*

THE QUOTE is from an editorial in *The Rockbridge County News* in 1947, concerning Washington and Lee University’s imminent demolition of the Old Blue Hotel (circa 1818). The hotel was located just below the Lee Chapel, on North Jefferson Street, and close to what was reputed to be the oldest existing structure in Lexington, the late-18th century Nannie Jordan House, which had been demolished in 1940.

The wonderful essay by Matt Paxton earlier in this publication is an overview of the historic preservation movement in Lexington and the founding of Historic Lexington Foundation in 1966. The original founders and subsequent directors of HLF have obviously been passionate about their cause and, through their extraordinary efforts, have been able to save many important structures and help educate the citizens of Lexington and Rockbridge County about the importance of preserving our past.

In addition to the following inventory of structures protected by HLF, the Foundation has been active and financially supportive of other improvements in the historic district. These initiatives include the 1970s projects to remove utility poles and move wiring underground; reconstruction of sidewalks with patterned brick; enforcement of building easements, which include restrictions on exterior and, in some cases, interior alterations; and an ongoing façade grant partnership with the City of Lexington that provides funds to building owners for exterior improvements.

— Rick Wolf, HLF Board of Directors

Much of the historical information in this article and the photo gallery that follows derives from *The Architecture of Historic Lexington* by Royster Lyle Jr. and Pamela Hemenway Simpson (Historic Lexington Foundation and The University Press of Virginia, 1977)

## PROPERTIES PROTECTED BY HLF ACTIVITIES

1969 Alexander-Withrow House, 3 West Washington Street, circa 1789; now operated by Thomas E. Gottwald and Ann Parker Gottwald as part of The Georges **OEN**

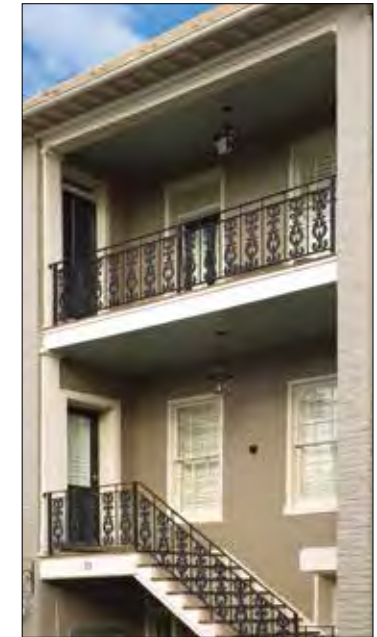


North Main Street façade.



3 West Washington Street, photo by Boude & Miley, 1867–70. Courtesy of RHS / WLU Special Collections.

1971 John McCampbell's House, 15 North Main Street, circa 1809; became the Central Hotel in 1907 and more recently the McCampbell Inn; now owned by the Gottwalds as the other part of The Georges **OE**



Top left: Central Hotel, 1971, with Central Lunch, known to college students as the Liquid Lunch, at the left (north) and The Limit, a miscellany shop, at the center, where the entrance to Taps is now located. Photo courtesy of *The News-Gazette*. Top right: staircase and balcony; above, the McCampbell Inn today.

**O** HLF ownership, renovation and disposition

**E** HLF easement

**N** Listed on National Register of Historic Places

RHS: Rockbridge Historical Society

WLU: Washington and Lee University



1971 5 West Washington Street, late 19th c.; Emily Shop in Mr. Paxton's article; now operated as Cabell Art Gallery



1972 Jacob M. Ruff House, 21 North Main Street, circa 1829; now a private residence



Ruff House in 1950s; courtesy of Library of Congress.




Above and left, Ruff House today. In contrast to the fictitious Rousselot (see facing page), Ruff actually was a hatmaker.

1973 Dold Building, 1 North Main Street, circa 1821; now operated as Pumpkinseeds boutique




Dold's Corner, early 20th century; photo courtesy of WLU Special Collections. Left and below: the building today. The hat-shop sign on the south façade was painted when downtown Lexington became the set for the movie *Sommersby* in 1992.

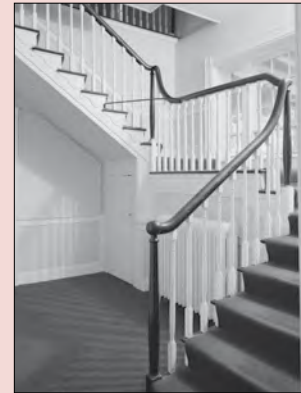


1974 Stonewall Jackson House, 8 East Washington Street, c. 1801; now operated by VMI as the Stonewall Jackson House Museum 




Top: Jackson House today; photo courtesy of Library of Congress. Above left: c. 1890. Above right: as the Stonewall Jackson Memorial Hospital, 1907–54; photo courtesy of RHS / WLU Special Collections. HLF owned the property, 1976–79, led a campaign that raised \$350,000 to restore and convert it to a museum, then presented it to the Jackson House Foundation, which in turn deeded it to VMI in 2011.

1974 Reid-White-Philbin House, 208 West Nelson Street, 1821; now a private residence 



Reid-White-Philbin House today from West Nelson Street (above) and from Barclay Lane (top left); staircase photo courtesy Library of Congress.

1974 Davidson-Tucker House, 10 East Washington Street, 1888; now staff offices of the Stonewall Jackson House 



Believe it or not, the same building: Davidson-Tucker House then and now. Photo at left, early 1970s, courtesy of *The News-Gazette*. Earlier, when the Jackson House was the local hospital (see facing page), the Davidson-Tucker House was a nurses' residence.

1976 Boiler House, 4 North Randolph Street, 1847;  
now a private residence



1999 Lorwood Building, 7–9 East Washington Street, 1880;  
now in commercial use (named for owners  
Lori and Woody Sadler Jr.)



1985  
Hopkins Green, southwest  
corner of West Nelson and  
South Jefferson Streets; deeded  
to City of Lexington in 2003



2003 Hopkins House, 120 West Nelson Street, circa 1845; leased to Washington and Lee for use as a program center



Top left: Hopkins House before 2016 renovations began. Above: circa 1885; photo courtesy of RHS / WLU Special Collections. Left: mantel detail.

1999 Lyric Theatre, 125 South Main Street (part of the Sheridan Building, perhaps late 18th c.); now residential condominiums



Lyric Theatre, circa 1987; today.



2001 Miller's House at Jordan's Point, 1811; given by HLF to the City of Lexington; now open to the public as a museum



Miller's House opened in 2016 as a museum. Right: early 1900s; photo courtesy of WLU.



2010 Holmes House, 203 Fuller Street, circa 1870; now a private residence



2007 Roberson-Phalen House, 111 South Jefferson Street, circa 1820; now a private residence



Clockwise, from above left: Roberson-Phalen House; photo courtesy of RHS / WLU Special Collections. Exterior and interior reconstruction. Roberson-Phalen House today.



2015 Lexington Presbyterian Manse, 6 White Street, 1848



# FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS SUPPORTED BY HLF



Clockwise from above:  
14 East Nelson Street Building, 2014  
9 East Nelson Street Building, 2015  
18 East Nelson Street (vintage furniture store, Yesterday Once More), 2013



Left: 2 North Main Street (Alexander-Withrow House), 2014  
Below left: 11 North Main Street (McCampbell Inn), 2014  
Directly below: 103 North Main Street (First Baptist Church steeple), 2014





Above: 15 West Washington Street (Walkabout Outfitters, left), 2016, and 5 West Washington Street (Cabell Gallery, right), 2014  
 Left: 29 West Nelson Street (Books & Company), 2014  
 Below: 101 East Washington Street (Campbell House — Rockbridge Historical Society headquarters), 2014



Top: 123 South Randolph Street (Blue Lab Brewing Company), 2014  
 Center: 101 West Nelson Street (The Palms), 2015  
 Bottom: 12 West Nelson Street (State Theatre), 2015

# OTHER KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 1971, with the urging of HLF, Lexington City Council created a "Historic Area" to protect façades of buildings in downtown.



## The News-Gazette

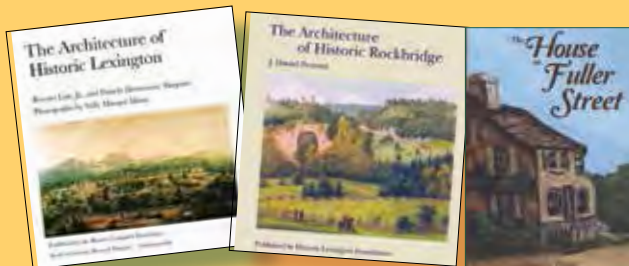
### Historic Zoning For City Area Is Approved

The Lexington City Council adopted last Thursday night a Historic Area zoning ordinance designed to preserve the historic and architectural

do not hardships on anyone carrying out the intent and purposes of the ordinance. The Historic Area lies within the original town

The Historic Area lies within the original boundaries of the town of Lexington dating back to 1778. It is a rectangular section, the boundaries of which run a half block west of Jefferson Street, one-third of a block south of Nelson Street, one-third of a block east of Randolph Street, and two-thirds of a block north of Henry Street.

North Main Street was the focus of HLF's initial efforts. Photo on this panel, 1950s, courtesy Library of Congress. Lexington's historic downtown and residential areas — 600 acres, eleven specific buildings — was named to the National Register of Historic Places on July 26, 1972. Photo inset below, North Main sidewalk replacement sponsored in the early 1970s by HLF.



1977, 2015, 2013

# GREETINGS



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Terrence R. McAuliffe  
Governor

November 4, 2016

Dear Friends:

I am pleased to extend a warm welcome to celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Historic Lexington Foundation.

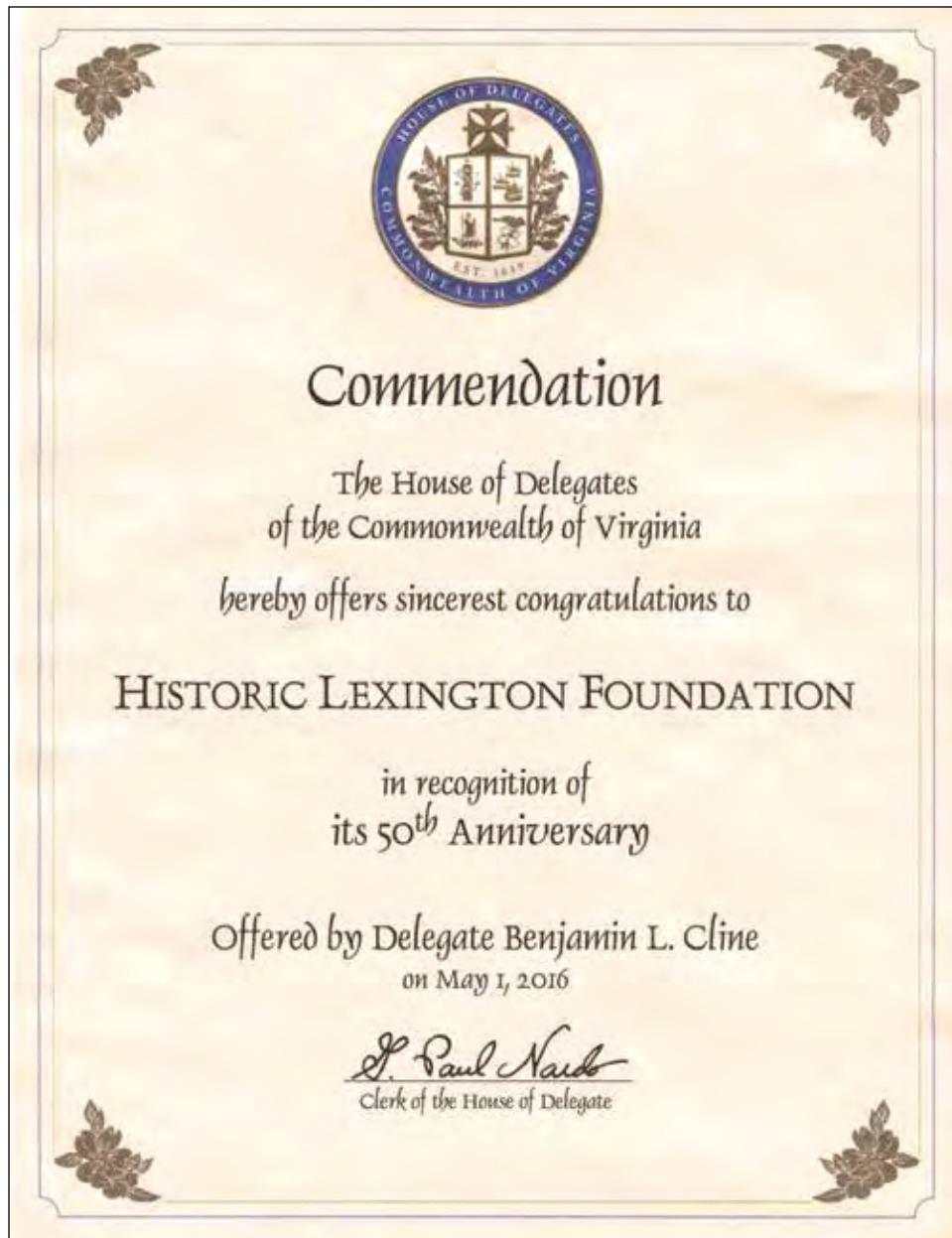
I commend the Historic Lexington Foundation for its outstanding efforts to preserve and promote the rich architecture and historic resources of Rockbridge County. The work the members of the Historic Lexington Foundation do to share the history of their community is a model of service for all Virginians. Thank you for all that you do to strengthen the Commonwealth.

I send my best wishes for a successful evening.

Sincerely,

Terrence R. McAuliffe

Patrick Henry Building • 1111 East Broad Street • Richmond, Virginia 23219  
(804) 786-2211 • TTY (800) 828-1120  
[www.governor.virginia.gov](http://www.governor.virginia.gov)



## SENATE OF VIRGINIA

Senate Joint Resolution No. 185

Commending the Historic Lexington Foundation.

Patrons — Deeds; Delegate: Cline

Agreed to by the Senate, March 3, 2016 ■ By the House of Delegates, March 8, 2016

WHEREAS, in 2016, the Historic Lexington Foundation celebrates its 50th anniversary of preserving the architecturally significant and related historic resources found in the City of Lexington and Rockbridge County and of educating people about the area's history, culture, and architecture; *and*

WHEREAS, the Historic Lexington Foundation was founded in 1966; that year, almost an entire block of residences built in the early nineteenth century was targeted for demolition; and a group of civic and educational leaders came together and successfully deterred the development; *and*

WHEREAS, because there was no organization in the area whose primary mandate was historic preservation, the work of that group led to the creation of the Historic Lexington Foundation; *and*

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Historic Lexington Foundation is to buy, preserve, and sell properties that illustrate the history and culture of Lexington and Rockbridge County and to promote the area's rich heritage; *and*

WHEREAS, the Historic Lexington Foundation has worked diligently to save Lexington's historic downtown area by acquiring structures that were in need of repair but had architectural or historical importance; *and*

WHEREAS, all of the neglected properties that were bought by the Historic Lexington Foundation subsequently had perpetual preservation easements attached to them; the foundation has renovated buildings and then sold them to private owners; *and*

WHEREAS, because of the Historic Lexington Foundation's work, 16 properties in the area now have preservation easements, and its efforts have inspired private owners to improve their properties — thereby furthering historic preservation in Lexington and Rockbridge County; *and*

WHEREAS, in the 1970s, the Historic Lexington Foundation spearheaded efforts to list Lexington's eighteenth century and nineteenth century downtown and residential neighborhoods in the National Register of Historic Places; the foundation helped to provide grants to subsidize improvements to building facades in the city's Historic District; *and*

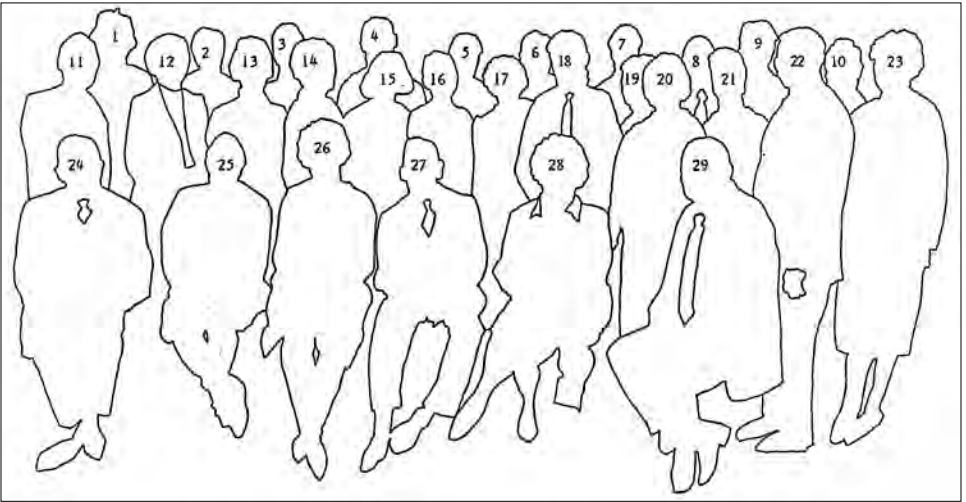
WHEREAS, the Historic Lexington Foundation published *The Architecture of Historic Lexington* and *The Architecture of Historic Rockbridge*, enabling researchers, students of history and architecture, and tourists to gain greater insight into the dwellings and structures in the area; the foundation developed self-guided tours of historic sections of the city and county; *now, therefore, be it*

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, that the General Assembly hereby commend the Historic Lexington Foundation on the occasion of its 50th anniversary; *and, be it*

RESOLVED FURTHER that the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Historic Lexington Foundation as an expression of the General Assembly's respect and admiration for its unwavering dedication to preserving the architecture and history of Lexington and Rockbridge County.

Susan Clarke Schaar / Clerk of the Senate

# INCOMING AND OUTGOING DIRECTORS, 1985



- |    |                       |    |                       |    |                            |
|----|-----------------------|----|-----------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 1  | Mary Stuart Gilliam   | 11 | Michael Anne Lynn     | 21 | Lucile L. Brandt           |
| 2  | Robert W. Meador      | 12 | Rebecca C. Merchant   | 22 | Flournoy H. Barksdale      |
| 3  | Edwin L. Dooley       | 13 | Marguerite G. Old     | 23 | Dianne W. Herrick          |
| 4  | G. Otis Mead III      | 14 | Suzanne S. Lipscomb   | 24 | J. Sanford Doughty         |
| 5  | M. W. Paxton Jr.      | 15 | Barbara L. Crawford   | 25 | Pamela Hemenway<br>Simpson |
| 6  | Richard B. Smith      | 16 | Louise K. Dooley      | 26 | Anne H. Tucker             |
| 7  | Lamar J. R. Cecil Jr. | 17 | Jen W. Heffelfinger   | 27 | Matthew W. Paxton Sr.      |
| 8  | D. E. Brady           | 18 | Richard B. Sessoms    | 28 | Mary E. Gentry             |
| 9  | Royster Lyle Jr.      | 19 | Josephine B. Griswold | 29 | Charles F. Phillips Jr.    |
| 10 | Richard R. Fletcher   | 20 | Joanna L. Smith       |    |                            |

