

HISTORIC LEXINGTON

FOUNDATION

Winter 2017

Newsletter

HLF Announces Lyle-Simpson
Preservation Fund page 3



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From the President's Desk

Dear Members and Friends of HLF,

As retiring president of HLF, I am compelled to recall the events of the past five years, two in this office. This I do with mixed emotions, strongly tending toward bittersweet, without the bitter. The sweet includes wonderful memories of the people and places that will forever be consigned to the reaches of my mind and heart. These I will take with me as I continue my place on this outstanding board to which I give my everlasting gratitude.

HLF, for me personally, began with the months of collecting oral histories of neighbors in Diamond Hill and Green Hill, now available on the HLF website. Other highlights include those histories leading to an eight-month Campbell House exhibit, which prompted the book called *The House on Fuller Street*, published by HLF (sadly seven of those who were featured are no longer with us). What friendships were made.

A donor's estate enabled the introduction of the Facade Grants Program, which provides financial assistance to the historic district and makes Main Street shine. HLF provided the resources and effort to obtain an official historic designation for Jordan's Point. The new Miller's House Museum was given support and encouragement. Annual Founders' Awards recognized special efforts of preservation of properties such as the Paxton House in Buena Vista. A major accomplishment was the establishment of the Lyle-Simpson Preservation Fund, which allows financial assistance to historic properties in the county. A centerpiece of the past two years was the publication of the book, *The Architecture of Historic Rockbridge*. HLF became a membership organization. A custom marker program for older homes was designed and made available. For National Preservation Month, HLF offered educational programs and tours.

Perhaps the most significant event was the celebration of the 50th anniversary, which encouraged the publication of *At Fifty*, the HLF history honoring the early founders and properties saved. The celebration was an experience to remember. So, that's what I will do. I will hand the gavel to the most capable Suzanne Rice, keep the sweet, and remember all the honor and joy of having served.

Let us save what remains...placed beyond the reach of accident, intent or decay.

With gratitude,
Beverly Tucker

Cover images: Photographs of lost Rockbridge buildings (from upper left) Buffalo Forge Schoolhouse, "Old Blue" Hotel in Lexington, Buena Vista Opera House, N. & W. Depot in Buena Vista

Cover photos are courtesy of W & L Special Collections

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HLF Establishes New Preservation Fund Focused on Saving Historic Structures in Rockbridge

In early 2013 when HLF made the decision to become a membership organization, it also changed its mission statement to reflect better the organization's goals for the future. The statement now reads, "to preserve, interpret, and present the historical heritage and fabric of Rockbridge County."

With this mission in mind, HLF has announced the establishment of a new preservation funding program to encourage property owners to preserve architecturally and historically significant sites, structures, and objects in the county, including the cities of Lexington and Buena Vista. The Lyle-Simpson Preservation Fund honors the contributions in preservation made by Royster Lyle and Pam Simpson, both of whom played seminal roles in HLF.

In announcing the fund at HLF's 50th anniversary celebration, Executive Director Don Hasfurther noted that HLF's most recent publication, *The Architecture of Historic Rockbridge*, includes images of Rockbridge structures lost over the years, including log houses, barns, resorts, schools, mills, and other industrial structures, as well

as other structures threatened today. Images of lost structures can be seen on the cover of this newsletter and below.

To be eligible for a grant, a property must be significant architecturally, historically or socially to the Rockbridge area. The criteria, while not as exacting, mirror the criteria for eligibility of the Virginia Landmarks Register. The sponsor must demonstrate the project's feasibility and an ability to implement the restoration project, as well as assurances that preservation will be maintained in the future.

In addition to these eligibility requirements, it is anticipated that a property's preservation will have the interest and support from local government, and public and private resources. It is hoped that the grant can also be used to leverage other sources of funding, including that of the property owner. Often interested parties within the community are willing to provide labor and materials.

Further details, including priorities for grant funding, can be found on the HLF website www.historiclexington.org. An application form is available, but it is recommended that property owners first have informal conversations with HLF.



Lexington Hotel and Tutwiler Building



Beattys Mill at Whistle Creek



Stillhouse at Willson Farm



Jordan House



Historic Lexington Foundation Inaugurates Historic Marker Program

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of its founding, Historic Lexington Foundation has established a new program to help showcase historic properties in and around Lexington. Beginning in the fall of 2016, owners of historic homes and other buildings have had the opportunity to order and install plaques on those properties listing the historic name and date of construction.

"By identifying such structures, HLF strives to foster broader public awareness and appreciation for the area's past and encourage efforts to preserve its architectural heritage," notes HLF Executive Director Don Hasfurther. Many historic cities, including Fredericksburg, Virginia, and Annapolis, Maryland, have long-established historic marker programs, each with markers on over 200 historic properties.

To inaugurate the program, Gene and Nancy Sullivan placed a marker on their South Main Street home. The brass marker reads "General Francis H. Smith House c. 1889." Designed by prominent Lexington architect William McDowell, the house was the last home of General Smith. A West Point graduate, Smith was the first superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute. Coincidentally, Gene Sullivan is a West Point graduate.

Generally, a building must be at least 50 years old and of historic and/or architectural significance to the Lexington area. The building's exterior must be properly maintained in accordance with its architectural style and heritage. Changes and alterations to the building's exterior must be consistent with its architectural integrity.



A building owner may apply to receive an historic marker. In the application, HLF asks for a historic name of the building and the date of construction for inclusion on the marker. The name may be associated with the first owner or others associated with the property, e.g., Jacob Ruff House, or a use during the history of the property, e.g., The Lyric Theater. As part of the application process, HLF also requests a brief description of the property, including architectural style and significance.

To learn more about the program and find the application, one can go to the HLF website www.historiclexington.org. Once an application is approved and prior to the fabrication of the marker, HLF will request payment of \$200 from the applicant to cover the fabrication cost.



Gene and Nancy Sullivan holding marker with picture of General Francis H. Smith in the background.



General Francis H. Smith marker on the building.

HLF Partners with VMI and W&L on Historic McDowell Cemetery

Over the years, many organizations from local Boy Scouts to the Fairfield Ruritans have sought to maintain the historic McDowell Cemetery, located off Rt. 11 just south of Fairfield. HLF joined the effort over three years ago. Under the leadership of then HLF Board Director Maury Hanson, the brick wall surrounding the cemetery was repaired and an electric wire installed to keep cattle from the wall. Additionally, archaeology students from Washington and Lee University worked to remove vegetation that had taken over the cemetery.

This fall, current HLF Board Director Arthur Bartenstein worked with VMI cadets and Washington and Lee students to clear the cemetery of vegetation. With the property owner's approval, Bartenstein has also worked to establish a spraying and mowing regimen to keep the cemetery free of unwanted vegetation.

The cemetery is notable for the graves of Captain John McDowell and seven of his militia comrades killed in 1742 in an Indian skirmish at Balcony Falls near present-day Glasgow. Nearby the cemetery once stood the Red House, the McDowell family home. William Clark stopped at the Red House in 1809 on his way from Fincastle, Virginia, to Monticello to report to President Jefferson on his journey to the Pacific together with Meriwether Lewis.

Captain McDowell is best known for his role in the "Borden Grant." Virginia Governor Gooch promised Benjamin Borden of New Jersey 100,000 acres of land near the "Fork of the James" in the Valley of Virginia if he would relocate 100 settlers to the tract. McDowell was chosen by Borden to survey the tract. McDowell descendants included Ephraim McDowell, a groundbreaking surgeon, and James McDowell, governor of Virginia prior to the Civil War.



*W&L students clean around historic gravestones.
Photo courtesy of Charlotte Radcliffe '20*



*W&L students cleaning up the cemetery.
Photo courtesy of Charlotte Radcliffe '20*



VMI cadets helped clean up the cemetery.



VMI cadets in front of McDowell memorial.



2017 Preservation Month to Focus on Historic Rockbridge Churches and Cemeteries

In celebration of National Preservation Month, HLF plans programs with the theme "Sacred Places: Rockbridge Churches and Cemeteries." This is the second such HLF program following activities in May 2014 that included visitations to historic churches in Lexington, as well as churches in the county, primarily in the Timber Ridge and Rockbridge Baths areas. In May 2017, HLF will be arranging for visitors to tour historic churches in the Buffalo Creek area south of Lexington.

While several of the churches have their origins in the mid-18th century, the church buildings that HLF plans to include in the tour date from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century. The churches were selected for their historical significance, distinctive architectural styles, and accessibility. The tours are still a work in progress, and consequently, tours of the churches mentioned here are subject to confirmation and approval by the church leaderships.

Falling Spring Presbyterian was founded in 1746. The first structure was log. Early pastors included James McConnell and Samuel Houston, a first cousin of the father of General Sam Houston. The present brick Gothic Revival style church was completed in 1865. Among the graves in the church cemetery are those of "Soldier" John Grigsby of Fruit Hill and William Weaver of nearby Buffalo Forge.

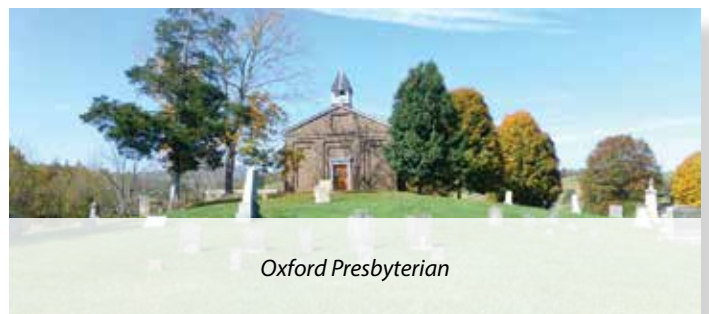
Oxford Presbyterian was established in 1758. McConnell and Houston also served as ministers in the church. The present brick Greek Revival style church was built in 1869. The church cemetery is full of graves of notable families from that area. Of interest is a plaque in the cemetery memorializing James Hall whose home was near Oxford. A member of the Buffalo Militia, Hall was involved in the 1777 Battle of Point Pleasant near the Ohio River. Following the battle, Hall and other members of the militia were tried and acquitted of the murder of Shawnee Chief Cornstalk.

South of Oxford on Blue Grass Trail lies historic Mt. Horeb United Methodist Church. One of the earliest Methodist preaching points in what is today Rockbridge County was established here in the mid-1790s. The present simple frame structure dates from 1904.

Visitations are also planned for two historic churches in Collierstown. Collierstown United Methodist was organized in 1837. The main block of this brick church dates from 1840. The tower and steeple are 20th century additions. Collierstown Presbyterian was organized in the early 1840s. Standing on the banks of Colliers Creek, the square brick building of 1856 is an important example of the Greek Revival style in Rockbridge County. The building is crowned with a large cupola. A cemetery adjoins.



Falling Spring Presbyterian



Oxford Presbyterian



Collierstown Presbyterian

50th Anniversary Celebration Honors HLF Founders and Early Supporters

Excerpted from Col. Keith Gibson's keynote remarks at the 50th anniversary gala, Moody Hall

When it comes to architecture, what makes you see promise when others see problems; hope where others see helplessness; a future where others might see failure? I don't know what makes you do those things, but I do know what it leads to: a community rich in heritage with deep flowing roots in architectural tradition. It leads to the creation of "Place" with a capital "P." It leads to multi-generational continuity of home and purpose.

The 1824 Barclay House, or Beaumont as it is known today, on Lee Avenue is such a place. In 1964 Kappa Alpha purchased the home with plans to raze it in order to build a new national headquarters. Now, I hasten to add that there are several silver linings to this cloud. When demolition threatened the home, a group of Lexington citizens assembled to prevent the loss of this landmark.

But saving the house was not a forgone conclusion. The idea kindled debate and controversy. Polite disagreement over the future of the home continued for two years. Nationally, historic preservation was in its infancy. There were places where it was working—Charleston, Boston, and Richmond, for example—and the forward thinking Lexingtonians contacted the Richmond folks for guidance.

Mary Stuart Gilliam, Louise Moore, and Matt Paxton, Jr., re-kindled the sleepy Ruth Anderson McCullough Branch of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA). The APVA was the first statewide preservation organization in the United States. It provided oversight to its many branches, almost all of which managed a historic structure in their community that was actually owned by the APVA. The branch here in Lexington, however, was an exception—it did not own a property. That, I think, proved to be a great good fortune.

You see, other branches around the state focused their preservation efforts on a single subject property. That structure alone answered the need to preserve architectural heritage—perhaps to the unintended neglect of other needy structures. But in Lexington, there was no focus! But for our architectural preservation, that would prove to be a great advantage. Instead there was a deep felt awareness that buildings make community and, while preservation may happen one structure at a time, saving streetscapes and neighborhoods is the larger objective.

Meanwhile the future of Beaumont hung in the balance. Finally, in March of 1966, Kappa Alpha agreed to sell the house to Col. and

Mrs. Carrington Tutwiler, who restored the property and made it their home.

By then the APVA chapter had already found its next project: the dilapidated Alexander-Withrow House on Main Street. But the state organization was not interested in the Lexington upstarts buying buildings for preservation—in fact, the state organization was downright opposed to it. Undeterred, the Lexington preservationist determined to create a new organization with the authority and resources to purchase and preserve structures.

With authorization from the State Corporation Commission in hand, this new organization—the Historic Lexington Foundation—took form on October 10, 1966, with D. B. Clayton as president, Royster Lyle as vice president, and Louise Moore as secretary-treasurer.

From that point on, it would not be a matter of HLF preserving a single house—the target now was the preservation of a community of structures, interrelated, cohesive, and multi-generational. The first major fundraising effort in support of the Alexander-Withrow project by the young organization was initiated in this very room at a kick-off dinner held in May 1970.

After the success of the Alexander-Withrow House came the Central Hotel (The Georges today)—soon followed the Dold Building and Ruff House, the Read-White-Philbin House, Hopkins House, and the Holmes House on Diamond Hill, among others. My favorite, of course, is the Stonewall Jackson House, which HLF first began to manage in 1974 and then own two years later. It was under your watch that the 200-year-old structure, which had served the community as its only public hospital for nearly 50 years, was returned to its anti-bellum town house period. The Jackson House became a part of VMI in 2011.

Fifty Years. Many great and interesting events have taken place along the way. Imagine—just briefly—a Lexington in which there had not been a Louise Moore, Mary Stuart Gilliam, or Matt Paxton—no Al Carr or Beverly Tucker—no Royster Lyle or Pam Simpson. A Lexington without HLF. But don't linger there. We have a much richer, deeply textured place not to imagine, but in which to live and raise our families. We have a place to add our tread wear in buildings who have known us for generations. Congratulations to you and to HLF for making *that* our reality.

50th Anniversary Gala Remembered in Photos



George Pryde and Dan Vance celebrate HLF's 50th anniversary.



Guests enjoy the gala dinner at Moody Hall, Nov. 4, 2016.



Major Burt Mitchell, VMI Bagpipe Master, pipes guests into dinner.

HLF Wishes To Give Special Thanks To

Beverly Tucker for exceptional service for two years as HLF President.

Ben and Carol Grigsby for support of HLF including office space.

Col. Keith Gibson for his keynote address at 50th anniversary gala.

Rick Wolf for six years of service on HLF board.

Paxton House Historical Society for hosting HLF's 2016 annual meeting.

Arthur Bartenstein for his presentation on Landscape Design at Washington College during Preservation Month.

Kappa Alpha Order and others whose contributions made Lyle-Simpson Preservation Fund a reality.

Save The Date:

HLF Annual Meeting
Saturday, April 8, 2017
at the New Providence
Presbyterian Church

Followed by a visit to the Brownsburg Museum