

The Village Way

March/April 2001 Vol. 34, No. 1

Fire of Civic Zeal—Revisited

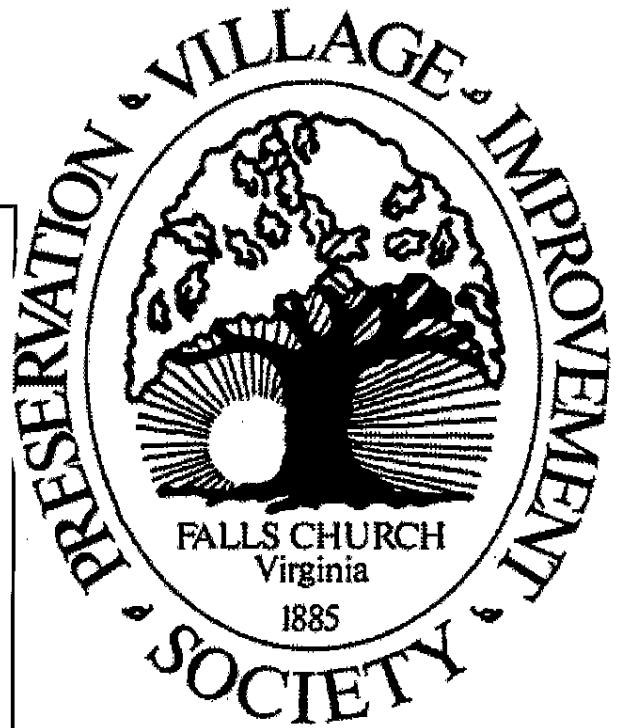
The year 2001 represents the 30-year anniversary of “A Fire of Civic Zeal”, a document authored by Elwood Street, president of the Village Preservation and Improvement Society from 1965-1968. It details the re-formation of the Society, prompted by efforts of concerned citizens to preserve the grounds and garden of the Lawton House. This historic building at 203 Lawton St. was threatened by the City’s transportation (“circulation”) plan for the central business district that proposed the extension of Park Place through the Lawton House property.

“Zeal” is interesting because it details the early years of the Society and all but ensures that this important piece of our history is not lost. But the document is also quite remarkable because it tells us that while so much has changed in Falls Church in the last 30 years, not much has changed.

Historic structures and landmarks are still threatened by a variety of forces and the Society is still working to make sure they are preserved. Trees and gardens remain a vital quality of life element and the Society is still working to plant and maintain them. Design issues still the subject of constant debate and the Society is still influencing that debate. In the words of Mr. Street back in 1971, a whole host of so-called “inevitable forces have been tragically triumphant in obliterating individual towns and small cities all across the country.” Thirty years later, the Society is still working to ensure that those forces are not so unavoidable.

However, probably the most important connection to the past is that 30 years ago (and even as far back as 1885 when the Society was originally founded) it is still made up of concerned citizens who believe Falls Church is an interesting, unique, and stimulating community in which to live.

To read the entire text of “A Fire of Civic Zeal”, please go to the Society’s web site: <http://www.vpis.org> and click on History/Mission.



Falls Church Village Preservation and Improvement Society

P. O. Box 6824

Falls Church, VA 22040

e-mail: fcvpis@yahoo.com

www.vpis.org

Invitation to Membership

The Village Preservation and Improvement Society, founded in 1885, is an active nonprofit citizen volunteer organization in the City of Falls Church, Virginia. For those who are not yet members of the Society, we would like to extend our invitation to join. Please clip out and send in the membership form on the bottom of page 5 or contact any of the Board members listed on page 2 for more information.

Year 2001 Officers

President: Ruth Rodgers 105 Buxton Road
(H) 532-8144 rrodg@aol.com
(W) 202-628-9222 rrodgers@hrrc.org

Vice President: Rob Puentes 705 Fulton Ave.
(H) 536-5192 fcvpis@yahoo.com
(W) 202-797-6071 rpuentes@brookings.edu

Treasurer: Carl Close 152 Reese Place
237-7236; candmclose@aol.com

Publicist: Martha Lostrom
809 West Broad Street
536-4955; mlostrom@narfe.org

Recording Secretary: Brad Gernand
1204 Seaton Lane
241-9265; bger@loc.gov and
oklahombre@yahoo.com

2001 Board of Directors

Peter Adriance 241-7015 padriance@usbnc.org

Meade Atkeson 241-2477

Nancy Brandon 536-8230 nancbrand@aol.com

Les & Cindy Brorsen les.brorsen@ey.com

William Fry 532-4829 ewmfry@aol.com

Melanie Griffith 532-5349 griffithsm@fccps.k12.va.us

Mark & Ellen Gross 533-8197

oaks303@aol.com and Mark.L.Gross@usdoj.gov

Jon Hundley 534-5492

David Eckert & Annette Mills 532-0884

Joanne Rodman 534-9328 rodman.joanne@epa.gov

Frank Ross 533-9418 dross69@hotmail.com

Ray & Marie Stewart 241-2339

rcsfcva@aol.com and Hawkeye423@aol.com

Gail Wadsworth & Peter Markham 534-4144

wadmark@erols.com

Midge Wang 534-8394 mthopewang@yahoo.com

Cay Wiant 533-3831 wiantjc@earthlink.net

Recent Actions of the Board

Proposed Changes to City Charter

In response to a public notice that first appeared in the December 21st edition of the News Press, the Society's Board of Directors called an emergency meeting to discuss six proposed changes to the City's charter. At that meeting, the Board voted unanimously to request that Council vote against a resolution requesting the charter amendments. First, the Board felt that given the ramifications of the resolution, there was insufficient time for citizens to review, discuss, deliberate and learn about these changes (the Commonwealth's General Assembly schedule demanded a mid-January fling date). Second, these proposed changes seemed to dismiss the excellent work done by the non-partisan Charter Review Commission and its final report presented to Council in October 1998. Third, there did not appear to be a specific and compelling reason to make these changes and would have reduced the opportunity for citizen input that many of us in the City hold so dear.

Prior to their vote, Council agreed drop the three most contentious changes. The Board still felt that there was no clear and compelling reason to proceed with the remaining changes and once again voted unanimously to request Council not to proceed. The proposed changes were, however, approved by Council and sent to the General Assembly in Richmond where they now appear to be headed for adoption.

It is important to note that these petitions to Council were made on behalf of the VPIS Board only and were not intended to reflect the opinion of the General Membership. Go to www.VPIS.org for the full text of the formally submitted comments.

Arbor Day Memorial

At the Society's February 2001 Board meeting, a resolution was unanimously passed in support of the City's conceptual development plan for Frady Park including a design for an Arbor Day Memorial. The memorial, originally proposed by the VPIS Board in October 1999 will augment the existing stage by adding an arbor and circular stone and brick wall to provide an appropriate gathering place for the Arbor Day ceremony and other small stage events. Plaques set in the wall will tell the story of the City's Arbor Day. If approved by City Council, funding for the memorial will be from private sources. The Board sent a letter in support of the plan and also requested the City consider an additional Art Deco style arbor. This letter reflected the Board's support for the Victorian Society's proposal for the installation of a Victorian design fountain at the East Broad Street entrance to the park.

For a more complete story of the first Arbor Day in Falls Church or more information about this year's Arbor Day ceremony, click on www.VPIS.org.

New Board Members

The Board held a potluck supper on January 26th to welcome our newest Board members: Les & Cindy Brorsen, William Fry, Mark & Ellen Gross, Gail Wadsworth & Peter Markham.

Upcoming Society Events

Summer Concerts in Cherry Hill Park

The Summer Concerts in Cherry Hill Park program schedule begins on June 21 and runs through August 2.

This long-running program was created in 1992 to enable citizens to hear local professional musicians perform in a beautiful outdoor setting against the backdrop of the Cherry Hill



Barn. The goals of the concerts are to:
a) encourage the use of the park for live cultural presentations, b) financially support and stimulate local musicianship, and c) improve the cultural climate of Falls Church.

The Village Society produces the event, hires and funds the musicians, provides and manages the sound system and the master of ceremony for the concerts. The City's Recreation and Parks Department is a co-sponsor providing the land and some publicity. Foxes Music Company (416 South Washington Street) has also been an occasional co-sponsor.

All programs take place on Thursday nights during the warm summer months at 7:00 p.m. In the past, some concerts have been moved inside the Community Center due to inclement weather conditions. However, of the 46 scheduled concerts only one was ever cancelled—and that was last year because the Community Center was not available.

Farmers Market Village Center Booth

In 1993, the Board of Directors unanimously passed a resolution to fund, prepare, and staff a "Village Center" booth at the Farmers Market in front of City Hall for the express purpose of selling beverages to raise money to purchase trees to plant on public land in the City. To date, over \$25,000 has been raised.

Since 1994, Starbucks Coffee at the West Falls Shopping Center has donated the coffee, cups, sugar, and napkins. Cold beverages are purchased locally and resold at the booth. In addition, the Society sells Falls Church products and provides informational brochures to the public about Falls Church and the Society.

Perhaps most important, the "Village Center" booth at the Farmers Market is a place where people come to hang out, discuss the issues of the day, tell stories, make new friends, and refresh old ones. The Farmers Market takes place directly in front of the Falls Church City Hall from 8:00 am to 12:00 noon and runs from the first Saturday in May through the Saturday before Thanksgiving. For further information call Dave Eckert, 532-0884.

Special Guest at June Society Meeting

Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, will be the keynote speaker at the June 7 General Membership Meeting. This meeting is open to all and will be held, appropriately, at the historic Falls Church Episcopal Church on 115 East Fairfax Street. Mr. Moe will address Society members on "Preservation and its Contribution to Economic Development in the Community" and he recently noted, "I look forward to the day when all Americans will want to save the best of the past because they realize it enriches the texture, character, and livability of our communities."

Richard Moe is the seventh president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which was chartered by Congress in 1949 and is the largest nonprofit preservation organization in the United States with 270,000 members nationwide. As president, Mr. Moe is responsible for leading the organization in its mission to provide leadership, education and advocacy to save the nation's diverse historic places and create more livable communities for all Americans. Under his direction, the National Trust has become an outspoken and effective advocate of controlling sprawl, and has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening the organized preservation movement.

A member of the boards of the Ford Foundation and the Civil War Trust, Mr. Moe is co-author of *Changing Places: Rebuilding Community in the Age of Sprawl*, a study of the causes of urban decline and the use of historic preservation as a tool for revitalization, published in 1997. In 1993 he authored *The Last Full Measure: the Life and Death of the First Minnesota Volunteers*, a Civil War history.

This promises to be a very relevant and interesting evening. All VPIS members and their guests are encouraged to attend!

Falls Church Home Concerts

The 2001 Home Concert Series is already underway with five performances scheduled through May.

The series was established by the VPIS Board in 1994 to provide citizens with the experience of hearing local professional musicians perform in the intimacy of Falls Church homes. The goals of the concerts are to: encourage the use of homes for live cultural presentations; financially support and stimulate local musicianship; improve the cultural climate of Falls Church and have a good time.

Each concert begins at 7:30 when the homeowners provide a brief description of their home. The musicians are then introduced and play a 30 - 40 minute set. After a 30-minute social break with refreshments, musicians play an additional set and answer questions from the audience.



A complete listing of the 2001 Home Concerts as well as the Summer Concerts in Cherry Hill Park can be found on this newsletter's back page calendar. A full chronology of the concerts and performers over the years is accessible on the Society's web page (www.vpis.org) with links to the performers' web sites, if available.

Village Society Places: The Presidents Garden

Where is it? The Presidents Garden is located in the 1000 block of West Broad Street under the north side of the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park bridge (aka the W & OD bike trail). The garden can be accessed by foot or bicycle from Grove Avenue along a paved trail by the side of the bridge or directly from the West Broad Street sidewalk. While visiting the Presidents Garden, stop by adjacent West End Park.

Why and how was it created? In the late 1960's, Louise Shepard, owner of the Lawton House and one of the seven Falls Church residents who revived the Village Society in 1965, organized and planted a garden along West Broad street, where the West Falls Church train station once stood. At the time Ms. Shepard and the Society planted the garden, the W&OD trail crossed the street there without a signal or crosswalk to protect pedestrians or cyclists. Nevertheless, the garden was a beautiful addition to an otherwise decaying part of the City.

In the early 1990's, Society member Craig Day successfully campaigned to have a bike bridge built over Broad Street for the two million cyclists and walkers who annually traverse that portion of the trail (the street below handles over 54,000 cars dally). Barry Buschow, former Society Director and one of two Falls Church representatives to the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (owners of the W & OD), guided the process through the political and financial process to ensure success. The bridge has since become a landmark in the City and a remarkable success story. One unfortunate side effect, however, was that Ms. Shepard's garden was destroyed by bulldozers.

In November 1992, after construction of the bridge was completed, the Park Authority agreed to let the Village Society replant and maintain a new garden. Just before this agreement, Ms. Shepard passed away and bequeathed \$2,000 to the Society which the Board of Directors decided to use for a bench and a trail for the newly proposed garden.

The Board voted to dedicate the garden to the efforts of Society presidents from 1885 through the Tricentennial year of 1999. It was named "The Presidents Garden" and in later years two large plaques were produced listing the names of the presidents and the Society's guiding principles. The garden was designed by Shirley Street of the City's Recreation and Parks Department using native Virginia shrubs and small trees that bloom white flowers at varying times of the season. It consists of Fringe Tree, Serviceberry, Inkberry, Fothegilla, Sweet Azalea, Sweetspire, Oak Leaf Hydrangea, Summersweet, and Southern Bayberry.

The soil had been hardback clay, compressed and abused for over 140 years by the railroad traffic and later by the bridge construction. To make the soil usable, a team of "mulchers" consisting primarily of Peter

Adriance, Barry Buschow, Dave Eckert, Janet Gohres, Jon Hundley, John Maier, Annette Mills, Curt Nette, Hunter Peil, and Keith Thurston

spread and mixed seven truck loads of mulch from the City's new leaf processing program. The mulch then decomposed on the garden plot for almost a year. In 1997, the Society planted over 50 shrubs and trees in the resulting rich, black humus.

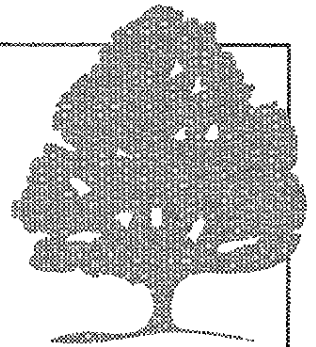
Additional shrubs were planted through 1999, including three fringe trees commemorating the three Presidents who served during the garden preparation period: Cynthia Garner, Edwin Bancroft Henderson, II, and John Maier. The Society allocated over \$10,000 dollars for the plant material, plaques, rocks, and trail from 1992 through 2000. Hundreds of hours of physical labor were logged by about 40 people to make the garden what it is today. The garden is at its peak during the months of June through September.

Future of the Garden. The shrubs and trees are maturing and we expect they will fill the area as intended by the site plan in year 2004. Remaining work includes placing a plaque on the bench honoring Louise Shepard and planting a Fringe Tree each time a Society president retires. The Presidents Garden, when combined with the bridge, West End Park, and the newly designed Tricentennial Garden (to be built in 2002) will create a naturalized outdoor gathering place of merit among the urbanized setting on the west end of Falls Church.

For more information about the Presidents Garden or to provide much-needed help with the garden's maintenance, please contact Barry Buschow at 533-8610.

DON'T FORGET! Arbor Day 2001 Celebration

The first Arbor Day in the Commonwealth of Virginia was celebrated in 1892 by the Village Improvement Society in the area now known as Frady Park on East Broad Street near Cherry Street. Falls Church continues to annually celebrate Arbor Day with the Village Society each April. The 2001 ceremony will be held on Saturday, April 21 and will be co-sponsored by the City's Tree Commission and the Victorian Society. In addition to presentations about trees in Falls Church, the Victorian Society provides a reenactment (in full costume) of the first Virginia Arbor Day. The ceremony also includes a dedication and planting of a tree to honor a recently deceased resident of the City. This event is an important part of the City's culture. Don't miss it!



**Project
Update:**

Neighborhood Trees Program

Anyone traveling the streets and sidewalks of Sherrow or Hillwood Avenues in the last few months has certainly noticed the outstanding results of the recently launched Neighborhood Trees Program (NTP), and the hard work of its Program Manager, Annette Mills and Neighborhood Coordinators Timothy O'Connell (Sherrow) and Tom Clinton (Hillwood). The plantings that took place on these two streets last November promise to greatly improve the neighborhoods' aesthetic quality, clean the air and provide a habitat for birds and other wildlife.

This Spring, tree-planting parties are being organized along Sherrow, Hillwood and Lincoln Avenues and Greenwich Street. An additional 50 street trees will be planted by program volunteers throughout the City. Funding for this important project comes from the Society, the City, and a grant from the Commonwealth as well as individual donations. To provide volunteer work, make a donation, or for more information on the project, contact Annette Mills at 532-0884.



Clip and Send

2001 Membership Registration Form Falls Church Village Preservation and Improvement Society

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please check appropriate box(es):

- \$10 Subscribing Member
- \$25 Heritage Member
- \$50 Arboreal Member
- \$100 Preservation Member
- \$300 Tricentennial Member
- \$ _____ Additional Donation

I would like to help on the following activities (please check a general category and/or circle a specific event):

- ADMINISTRATION (Publications, Membership, Archives/Local History)
- ENVIRONMENTAL (Tree and Garden Planting, Stream Restoration, Arbor Day, Earth Day)
- CULTURAL (Attic Treasures Sale, Independence Day Readings, Summer Concerts in the Park, Farmers Market, Memorial Day booth/parade, Tinner Hill Festival booth)
- DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT (Village Design, Excellence in Design Awards)

Please complete this form and mail it with your check to:

Village Preservation and Improvement Society
P.O. Box 6824
Falls Church, VA 22040

VPIS April - August 2001 Schedule

April

- 6 Home Concert** Roots of African-American Song:
James Thomas - 7:30 pm*
- 12 Board Meeting** 318 West Rosemary Lane - 7:30 pm
- 21 Arbor Day Celebration**
Don Frady Park, East Broad Street - 2 pm

May

- 4 Home Concert**
Lighten Up! Sunshine Skiffle Band - 7:30 pm.*
- 5 Farmers Market Booth** (every Saturday until
October) City Hall - 8 am—12 pm
- 10 Board Meeting** 208 Patterson Street - 7:30 pm
- 31 Memorial Day Parade and Festivities**

June

- 7 Spring General Membership Meeting** The historic
Falls Church Episcopal Church, 115 East Fairfax
St. - Keynote address: Richard Moe, National
Trust for Historic Preservation 7:30 pm—9:30 pm

- 16 Tinner Hill Festival** 500 S. Washington St. 12-5 pm
- 21 Concert in Cherry Hill Park** Airmen of Note 7 pm
- 28 Concert in Cherry Hill Park**
Mike Maher Quartet - 7 pm

July

- 4 Independence Day Readings**
City Council Chambers - 12:00 noon
- 5 Concert in Cherry Hill Park** Dave Elliot Band 7 pm
- 12 Concert in Cherry Hill Park**
Andrew Acosta Band - 7 pm
- 19 Concert in Cherry Hill Park**
Falls Church Swing Ensemble - 7 pm
- 26 Concert in Cherry Hill Park**
Sunshine Skiffle Band - 7 pm

August

- 2 Concert in Cherry Hill Park**
Falls Church Concert Band - 7 pm

* Call 532-0884 for locations and tickets.



**Falls Church Village
Preservation and
Improvement Society**
P. O. Box 6824
Falls Church, VA 22040

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
FALLS CHURCH, VA
PERMIT NO. 66