



Vista opened

One of the pleasures of living on Diamond Hill is the opportunity to enjoy our beautiful vistas of the James River Valley and the surrounding hills. As shown in the left photo above, the view of the valley from the east end of Washington Street has been blocked by two decrepit old trees that were completely shrouded in ivy. During February a city contractor removed the smaller tree, opening up the view of the valley and the Carter Glass Bridge (see right photo). As spring arrives the city will be continuing the kudzu-removal process that was begun last year along the Washington Street steps. Our thanks to Klaus Schreiber and his crew for their work improving the appearance of our Church Street area.

Georgetown Tour April 28

REMINDER: The Lynchburg Historical Foundation is organizing a group of 50 to attend the Georgetown House Tour on Saturday, April 28th. The tour will showcase ten of Georgetown's finest historic homes. The bus will leave Lynchburg at 7:00 a.m. and return that evening after a stop for dinner.

The cost of the tour—\$75.00 for LHF members or \$100.00 for non-members—includes transportation, an advance ticket and tea at historic St. John's Church. Reservations must be made through the Foundation's office by April 6th.



Interested in old photos?

On April 11th, Nancy Marion and Joe Stinnett will give a presentation at Jones Memorial Library entitled *The News & Advance Photograph Collection (1940-1990)*. The program begins at 5:00 p.m. and there is no charge for admission. For details call 846-0501.



New downtown dining

The Machu Picchu restaurant has opened at 512 Fifth Street. The new business is located behind the Starlight Cafe in the former Trailways Bus Station building. Operated by Elsa and Javier Duran, the restaurant features authentic Peruvian cuisine created by Javier, their Cordon Bleu Chef. Like the Starlight Cafe, the decor is not fancy, but the interior is clean and neat and the rotisserie chicken shown on their flyer certainly looks mouth-watering!

Get ready for an "Egg-Citing" Easter Egg Hunt!

Children up to age 10 are invited to our annual Diamond Hill Easter Egg Hunt which will be held Saturday, April 7th, from 10:30 to 12:00 on the lawn at the corner of Washington and Harrison Streets. Children should bring their own Easter Baskets, and they're welcome to bring their friends too!

We will divide the children into different age groups so that they will be hunting for goodies with other children close to their own age. We'll also play games such as the egg roll and the egg toss! Afterward, everyone is invited to the Smallshaw family's home, 409 Washington Street, for refreshments.

Bring your children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and friends! In case of rain, the Easter Egg Hunt will be held on Monday, April 9th, at 2:00 p.m. For more information, contact Mari Smallshaw at 846-3242. Thanks for organizing this project, Mari!



Blight removal threatened

Just the mention of "eminent domain" is enough to raise hackles among most Virginians. So, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2005 that a private property could be taken by a Connecticut town for use in an economic development project, our local politicians grabbed the opportunity to make some points. The result was efforts by Senator Steve Newman, Delegate Ben Cline and others to narrow the state's power to take property through eminent domain. The legislation now rests with Gov. Timothy M. Kaine.

These politicians apparently had little concern for the critical importance eminent domain plays in the removal of spot blight in our city. The major problem is that they changed the definition of blighted property. At the present time, a building is considered blighted if it is in such impaired condition that its own value is not only depreciated but its condition also negatively affects surrounding properties—even the whole neighborhood.

The proposed bill redefines blighted property from a structure that is merely dilapidated to one which "is vacant and constitutes a public nuisance" and "is beyond repair or unfit for human habitation." This fits the definition of *demolition by neglect* which is anathema to preservationists. "Blight was never meant to mean simply ugly," Ben Cline told the General Assembly on closing day, "Failure to paint is not a reason to take away an individual's property rights." City Attorney Walter Erwin said that the General Assembly may have missed the point. "The city wants to preserve rather than demolish our housing stock."

It is certainly better to take a blighted property and renovate it than to allow it to deteriorate to the point where it must be demolished. Saving a building while it can still be saved prevents those years of neglect while the neighborhood suffers and the building continues to deteriorate. During those additional years the city also receives less tax income from the blighted property and surrounding properties.

Like some other historic districts, Diamond Hill has a further problem that only eminent domain can address: It's the problem of deteriorating property in the hands of out-of-state owners. These owners know they have the city over a barrel; the city cannot take them to court for failure to meet the Minimum Maintenance Ordinance which is part of the statewide building code. Just in our historic district, we have at least four such houses suffering from demolition by neglect. The court can issue summonses and even fine these owners, but the judge's rulings cannot be enforced.

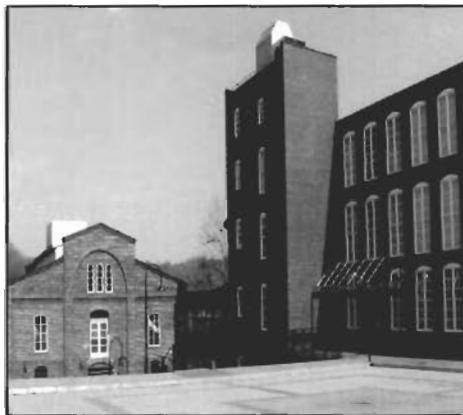
If you know some of our state senators or delegated please explain our problem to them or write a letter to Governor Kaine. City Council has already sent a letter to the governor asking him to amend the legislation to restore the original definition of blight.



Jamestown 400th, Lynchburg 250th

Lynchburg is one of the Virginia 2007 Communities commemorating the 400th Anniversary of Jamestown and, in Lynchburg, the 250th Anniversary of John Lynch's ferry service across the James River. SDHHS is participating in this celebration by hosting two events. On the evenings of October 25-27 the Lynchburg Historical Foundation will hold its annual **Ghosts of Historic Lynchburg Tour** on Diamond Hill. Guests will enjoy an evening strolling through the neighborhood with a guide who will delight them with stories about our collection of ghosts.

On December 1st and 2nd citizens will be invited to tour several Diamond Hill homes during our **Historic Homes Tour**. Both of these tours will require strong support from our members; so please take a moment to reserve those dates on your calendar.



Hotel opening delayed again

We went out on a limb in our March issue and quoted an announced opening date for the Bluff Walk Center. Sorry about that. The opening has been postponed again, but LHF members will be receiving an invitation soon for a red-carpet Grand Opening event at the new hotel. A few events are being held at the facility during April. Manager Chris McSwain stated that Shoemakers restaurant may open before the hotel.

Diamond Hill News

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Diamond Hill Historical Society
 P.O. Box 803, Lynchburg 24505
 Website: www.diamondhill.org

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Vice-President: Dan M. Hague
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Hospitality: Tina Secord
Long-Range Planning: Dan M. Hague
Fund-Raising: Kaye Chandler
Endowment Fund: George W. Dooley

Meetings

Business meetings are usually held at 7:30 p.m. on first Tuesdays of each month except June, July and August. Owners of properties in the Diamond Hill Historic District and others interested in supporting the district are welcome to attend.

Membership

Annual dues for Active Members are \$5.00 per person (\$10.00 effective 2006) and the initiation fee is \$5.00 (first year). Active Membership is limited to adult members of households owning Diamond Hill property. Annual dues for Associate Members are \$10 per person (no initiation fee). All members receive this newsletter at no charge. Newsletter subscriptions for non-members are \$3.50 per year (\$5.00 effective 2006).

Publisher's Statement

The Diamond Hill Historical Society (DHHS) is a nonprofit historic preservation organization approved under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. Its purpose is to preserve and encourage—through the fostering of education, research and restoration—the historical and architectural integrity of the Diamond Hill Historic District. DHHS was incorporated in the Commonwealth of Virginia February 22, 1979. Views expressed in the *Diamond Hill News* do not necessarily reflect the position of DHHS or its officers and directors.

Kaye's Corner

Notes from our president

Dennis and I will be celebrating Passover at the community Seder at the synagogue during the April business meeting. I really hate to miss the special presentation on DHHS's Jamestown descendants.

We are in the process of updating our website! If you have more current pictures and/or historic pictures of your home, please scan them and send an electronic copy to Mari Smallshaw at mws1019@aol.com. Mari also welcomes your suggestions for improving our website.

We need someone to serve as Membership Secretary. Scott Carstens has had to resign this position due to illness. This is a very important role for our organization. If you are interested, please call me at 847-0491.

Our sign at the Church Street Garden is in dire need of painting. Would someone please volunteer to take care of this chore prior to May 6? Please call me (847-0491) for information on the paint.

We have many exciting opportunities for participation in the coming months. Check the newsletter to find the perfect opportunity for you. Membership should be more than sending in a check. Please get involved, get to know your neighbors, and have a good time!!! Here are some opportunities:

April 14, Operation Clean Sweep: We need at least five members to help Lynch's Landing with their annual clean up in downtown Lynchburg. Meet at the community market at 9:00 a.m. They usually provide breakfast.

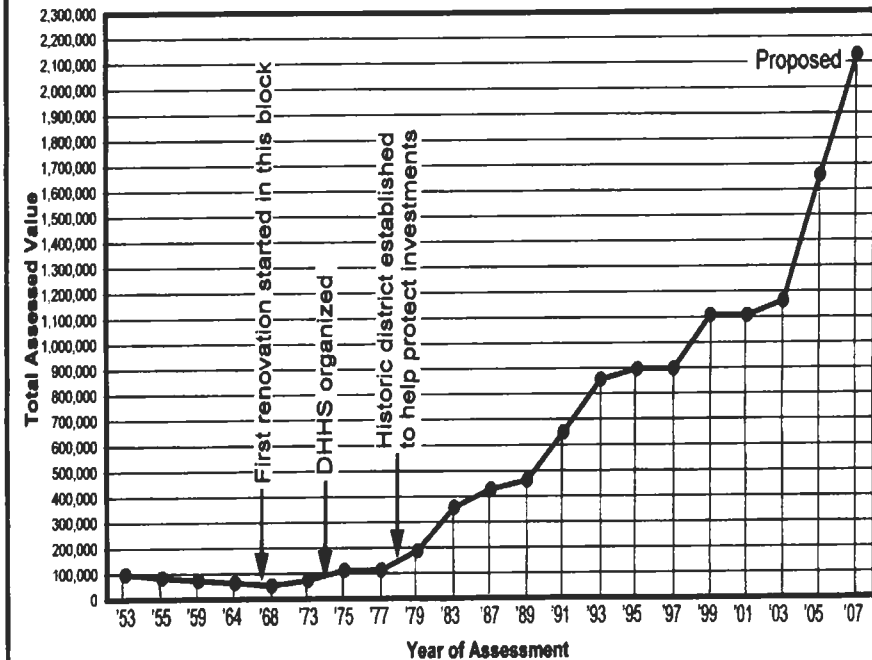
April 21, Blackford Garden Cleanup: This is a group effort. We will meet at Blackford Garden at 10:00 a.m. Our focus will be on cleaning up limbs and trash in Blackford Park to prepare it for the first mowing and cleaning up along Grace Street. Many hands make short work, so please come out. Lunch will follow on the patio at the home of Kaye and Dennis at 505 Washington Street.

April 23—May 5, Homeowner Cleanup: Let's get our neighborhood ready for our Grand Open House by beautifying the fronts of our own homes. This will be an individual effort at a time that's convenient for you! Take a critical look at the front of your home and decide what chores should take priority to get ready for potential buyers walking through our neighborhood. Please mow your tree lawns and front lawns. Weed the tree lawns and front flower beds and, if needed, spray herbicide on weeds in your sidewalk. Plant colorful flowers. On May 5 or the morning of May 6, please sweep your sidewalk and pick up trash. If you live next door to an out-of-town owner, please consider cleaning up your neighbor's tree lawn too so that our neighborhood will look its best. Dennis will try to get a dumpster for this cleanup. An announcement will be made at our April meeting or call Dennis at 847-0491.

May 6: Grand Open House: 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. We need volunteers to provide cookies (store-bought are fine), lemon-aid mix, and pinwheel and pimento cheese sandwiches for the hospitality house. I could also use help setting up the refreshments. We also need volunteers to welcome potential buyers to our neighborhood and provide information about DHHS. Call Kaye at 847-0491.

TOTAL REAL ESTATE ASSESSMENTS FOR A TYPICAL DIAMOND HILL BLOCK

Block 025-22 (Old Block D2)



DH assessments soar

After the huge assessment increases in 2005, many Diamond Hill property owners did not expect such huge increases again this year. Even the fact that a dozen properties on the hill have been sitting unsold for a year with only one sale has apparently been ignored by city assessors. That one sale only took place after Chris and Heather Palladino drastically reduced their asking price for 609 Washington St. Several of our members plan to appeal their increases. If no relief is provided, the increase for typical block shown above will amount to 28.5%!

The chart vividly shows how property values have changed in our historic district during the past 54 years. Notice how property values were slowly decreasing during the '50s and '60s. As soon as the first renovation began, however, assessments began their relentless climb. Although this chart shows totals for only one specific block of properties, the changes are typical for our entire historic district.

Philip Johnson's house to open

If you plan to visit New England this summer you might enjoy touring the National Trust's newest house museum, architect Philip Johnson's famous Glass House, shown above. This National Trust Historic Site, one of the most celebrated examples of modernist architecture in the world, will open to the public on June 23rd for the first time in its 50-year history. Each guided tour will be limited to ten people to ensure that guests enjoy an intimate experience. Tickets and information are available online at

<http://www.philipjohnsonglasshouse.org>



1865.

1881.

JOHN H. KINNIER,

—DEALER IN—

Coal, Wood, Ice,

AND BALED FORAGE,

Jefferson Street, between 12th and 13th.

Particular Attention Given to Shipping of Coal and Ice.



Construction at Lucado House

If you wondered what that monster was in the garden behind the Lucado House recently, you'll be relieved to learn it's simply a machine for pumping concrete to various parts of the construction site. L.G. Flint, the general contractor, is hard at work on the improvements Don and Carolyn Banker are making at their home.

John H. Kinnier

The Queen Anne house at 518 Washington St. owned by Bill and Sue Baldwin was built in 1897 by John H. Kinnier. John's advertisement reproduced above appears on page 25 of the *General Directory of the City of Lynchburg 1881-82*. His ad suggests that he launched his business in 1865 as the Civil War was ending.

DH properties for sale

- ◆ 1408 Church St. (for sale by owner)
- ◆ 1414 Church St.
- ◆ 1223 Clay Street
- ◆ 1304 Clay: Ryland-Addison House (1906)
- ◆ 1308 Clay: Stokes House (1906)
- ◆ 1313 Clay: Akers House (1904)
- ◆ 707-09 Fourteenth St: duplex
- ◆ 1420 Madison: Moore House (1910)
- ◆ 604-06 Pearl: Blackford Duplex (c. 1880)



Ordinance revised

City Council revised a city ordinance last year which now requires that any pet animal bitten by a rabid animal be confined for 45 days. The ordinance formerly required confinement for 30 days; the revision was made to agree with state law. Although we do not recall hearing of any rabid animals on Diamond Hill, it is not uncommon for dogs, cats, squirrels, possums and skunks to roam through our neighborhood; so the possibility of pets becoming infected does exist.

Got news?

If you have news you think our members would enjoy reading, please send it to Jim Carrington at jimandbob@att.net. Mailing list corrections should also be sent to Jim.

April Meeting

Tues., April 3rd
7:30 p.m.

at the

Dingee-Stalling House
(c. 1904)

316 Washington St.

Hosts: Charles Bedat and
David Porter

Diamond Hill Historical Society, Inc.

P.O. Box 803, Lynchburg, VA 24505

www.diamondhill.org