



Diamond Hill News

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New Neighbors on Diamond Hill

By Mary Kathryn McIntosh

It takes a special person to see the potential in our old houses. Fortunately, Mark Little and Todd Leap toured the Charles Blackford house and knew they wanted to restore it. The house, built in 1855, has as its moment of fame the night that Robert E. Lee spent the night there in May, 1868. In the intervening years the house has been unoccupied, divided into apartments, and partially remodeled.

A 1959 photograph of the Blackford House is the inspiration for what is to come. Those who drive by the house will notice extensive restoration of the front porch in progress and a new sidewalk incorporating the old tapestry bricks found on the property. The porch railing above the porch is being returned at last and a small portico over the side door is planned to protect that entrance from rainstorms. The gravel in the front lawn is being removed and the lawn will incorporate additional traditional plants.

Mark's mother, Joyce Wingfield Little, resided in the Diamond Hill area for a time when she was growing up. The experience came full circle upon returning to the neighborhood to live this summer. Prior to coming to Diamond Hill the family lived in an 1850's farm house in Rustburg where Mark and his twin sister Christy attended Rustburg High School. Upon graduation Mark sought his fortune in Washington, DC, where he eventually worked as an executive for Neiman Marcus. Christy is also a member of the Diamond Hill household. She is an active participant in the Virginia Special Olympics. In spite of all the work ahead the family is glad to be living on the "Hill." Please welcome them to the neighborhood!

The side porch was added in the 1870's

*Blackford House
613 Pearl Street*

Built c. 1850 it was purchased by Charles Minor Blackford for his bride Susan Leigh Colston whom he married 19 February 1856 at her home in Albemarle County. It remained in the Blackford family until the 1930's.

- Photos 1959 -



Members volunteer to clean Diamond Hill Garden

Our garden on the Church Street traffic island was getting so overgrown that several of our members got together on their own and cleaned it up on Saturday morning, Aug. 23rd. Our thanks to Fran and Rad Briley, Pat Gatti, and Sally and Jeff Schneider for their initiative and hard work. The Diamond Hill Garden once more shows our neighborhood at its best!

October events

- ♦**Oct 8:** "The History of Family-Owned Stores in Lynchburg," 5 pm, Jones Mem. Library, free
- ♦**Oct 11:** Day at the Point, Point of Honor, 10 am to 3 pm, free admission, food, music & kids games
- ♦**Oct 23-25:** Ghosts of Historic Lynchburg, Rivermont Historic District, call LHF for tickets
- ♦**Oct 24:** Apple Tasting with Tom Burford, 6-8 pm, Point of Honor, \$25, limited to first 45 who register

Last call for calendar photos

Jeff Schneider, chairman of our 2009 Calendar project, is not receiving the cooperation he needs from our membership. September 20 was the deadline for submitting photographs, but response has been poor. If you have not done so already, please check your collection of Diamond Hill photographs and send your top picks to Jeff at jeffandsally.schneider@att.net. Call him at 846-9139 if you have questions.

Congrats, Sarah and Scott!

Our congratulations to Sarah and Scott Carstens on the birth of their first child, Joshua Alfred Carstens, on August 21st at Virginia Baptist Hospital. The 7-pound, 2-ounce boy is named Alfred for Sarah's grandfather. Joshua is a name Scott and Sarah agreed on years ago for their first son. Scott was not traveling during August and September, so he was there for the big event. Mother is doing well, Joshua is already over 8 pounds, and Scott is "absolutely ecstatic."

611-13 Washington St. again in foreclosure

Legal notices in the *News & Advance* again offered 611-13 Washington St. for sale at public auction on Sept. 25, 2008. The property is owned by Marcel A. Constantino, who purchased it May 24, 1999. The owner has been fined several times for ignoring city inspectors' notices to make repairs. The Lynchburg Re-development & Housing Authority is considering taking the property.

Jeff Schneider appointed to HPC

With the resignation of Scott Glass and another member of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), the possibility of again having a Diamond Hill representative on the board became a possibility. Our treasurer, Jeff Schneider, submitted his application to serve on the HPC and President Pat Gatti wrote City Council in support of his appointment. Some of our members also contacted friends on Council, asking them to appoint Jeff.

During their June 24 meeting, City Council appointed Jeff Schneider and Scott Smith to the commission. DHHS members who have questions about how to obtain permission to make exterior changes to their property can now contact either Jeff Schneider or HPC Secretary Annette Chenault.

The HPC has elected Dr. James H. Mundy as their new chairman and Frances Calhoun of Garland Hill as vice-chairperson.

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Diamond Hill Historical Society, Inc.
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Tours: Julianna K. Neighbors
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Children's Activities: Mari Smallshaw
Street Restoration: Jon Alvarenga & Larry A. Wollan, Jr
Auditor: Charles Bedat
Endowment Fund: Jeffery Schneider
Parliamentarian: Charles K. Bradner

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 historic preservation are welcome to attend.

Membership

Annual dues for Active Members are \$10.00 per person 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 \$5.00 per year.

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.

HPC Actions

During the summer and fall the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) approved Certificates of Appropriateness (COAs) for the exterior renovation of several Diamond Hill properties:

◆ **1420 Church St:** COA for Jay Oschrin to build a 10 by 12-foot deck with wood railing (square pickets) behind the house. Visible portions of the deck are to be painted to match the house.

◆ **406 Pearl St:** COA for Granville and Diana Coleman to build a 16 by 26-foot deck behind the house using composite decking and an iron railing. 406 Pearl St. is classified as a “non-contributing property.”

◆ **1421 Harrison St:** COA for Jon and Josie Alvarenga to replace garage door with same style door, apply brick veneer to sides of garage and paint the building.

◆ **310-312 Washington St:** COA for HROK, LLC to reduce parking problems on Washington St. by cutting a new “grass” driveway from Pearl St. so that tenants can park behind the apartment house, rather than on the street. HPC also approved adding plantings along the new driveway, planting boxwoods in front, and installing a Dumpster behind building to eliminate the problem of trash cans sitting on the street day after day. “I want Washington Street to look good,” owner Oliver Kuttner told the HPC.

◆ **618 Pearl St:** COA for Mark C. Little and E. Todd Leap (Bailey Gray, LLC) to restore the railings on the porch, replace the porch floor, repair the front portico, and add a small porch at the entrance on the right side of the house. The new porch is to have columns of the same style and proportions as those on the front portico, but smaller. Work on the front walk had earlier been approved administratively.

◆ **515 13th St:** COA for Glenwood S. Hudson to install wooden deck with railing on back of house. Pickets must insert into top rail. Deck and rails are to be painted or stained a color approved by HPC Secretary. Also approved request to move and rebuild wall next to driveway.



Stabler-Bocock-Watts House

Who were the Watts in Stabler-Bocock-Watts?

Our thanks to Bob Garbee for finding an oral interview of Dr. James Winston Watts, a renowned neurosurgeon whose family lived in the Stabler-Bocock-Watts House during his early years. Thanks also to George Dooley for printing the document and forwarding it to us. The entire interview is over 75 pages long and was conducted over several days in 1979. The interview covers his childhood, his years at VPI and UVa, his medical training, and his long career. Sections of interest to our readers concerning Lynchburg and Diamond Hill are reprinted below. [Source: <http://161.253.158.31/gwencyclopedia/index.php>]

[M]y family, as far as we can determine, originated from a Scotch/Irish minister who came here in the latter part of the nineteenth century. I don't know much about the people in between, but my grandfather was born in Bedford County and then he moved to Lynchburg, Virginia. He was in the Civil war, served under General Turner Ashby, became a colonel, and after the war, he and his brother owned a hardware store. My father, Thomas Ashby Watts, was named for General Ashby. My father was a banker first and then later Secretary Treasurer of the Lynchburg Perpetual Building & Loan Co. in Lynchburg.

When I filled out my first application to go to VMI, I knew father went down to his office regularly, but I did not know exactly what his business was, so I said, “Father, what do you do? I've got to put into this little slot what your occupation is.” He says, “I am a capitalist.” I said, what is a capitalist?” He said, “A man who lives off his capital.” I used that in every application I filled out. Mother's father was a physician, a

family physician, but he died in his thirties of tuberculosis.

We lived in Lynchburg ... a city of 30,000 people and at one time during World War I Father told me it was the second richest city per capita in the United States. This wasn't based on industry in Lynchburg because there weren't many industries. The largest were Craddock-Terry Shoe Company, Lynchburg Foundry, Glamorgan and a few tobacco companies. The wealth was based on investments that Lynchburg people made in West Virginia and Kentucky coal. My home was on Washington Street. It was a big, old, red-brick house which is now known as the [Stabler-Bocock-Watts House]. Now the neighborhood is being renovated and restored. [Bocock] was a United States congressman. ... Julia Meem Harrison, whom I later married, lived on the same street [at 405 Washington St.] about one block away. We thought Lynchburg had everything that any city could have with the possible exception of Broadway, where there was the theater.

Mother ran the home and, as Lord Byron said, “A man is the head of the house, but the woman is the boss,” and Mother certainly was the boss. Father didn't like to discipline us, he turned over the entire running of the home to Mother. If we got into any trouble Mother came to our rescue. There were three sons: James, Ashby and Hubert. I was named for my grandfather, Ashby was named for our Father and Hubert was named for my Father's brother. It may tell you something about us; our first son was named for me, our second son was named for Julia's father Randolph Harrison. Our grandchildren are named James Winston Watts IV, Randolph Harrison Watts Jr., Julia Harrison Watts, and Ann Randolph Watts. We must have some pride in the family and like something about the families.

I would like to tell you something about my wife's family. She's descended from Pocahontas and John Rolfe. ... She had two Harrison presidents in her family. Her father was a distinguished lawyer and was counsel representing Virginia in the Virginia/West Virginia debt case. Virginia was suing West Virginia when West Virginia seceded from Virginia.

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Virginia sued to make West Virginia pay its share for roads built when they were a small state. The case was in litigation twenty years, and Mr. Harrison won the case.

Now—I must mention Dr. George M. Preston who was our family physician. Dr. Preston was a general practitioner who also did surgery and gynecology. We had the greatest confidence in Dr. Preston. One thing impressed me rather early. Mother would get worn out from time to time and feel so badly that she had to stay in bed. That naturally upset Father, so he'd call Dr. Preston. We could hear Dr. Preston's car approaching the house a block before it got there. I think you'll remember in those days when a car was in low gear it made a grinding sound.

Dr. Preston drove in low gear because he didn't learn to drive until he was an older man. When he was driving, if he passed a lady, he'd take off his hat to her. As a result he had several minor accidents; so he always drove in low gear when he was in the city. When he went on a trip, he shifted to high gear. But we could hear Dr. Preston's car driving up to the house; then he'd walk up the flight of wrought iron stairs and ring the bell. Father would let him in. Mother had been telling Father how badly she felt, but then when Dr. Preston got up to her room he'd say, "Mrs. Watts, how do you feel?" and Mother would say, "Why I feel fine." Father never, never did understand that.

Father often felt badly. He'd had tuberculosis at one time and he had rheumatic heart disease. When I examined Father I could hear murmurs over every heart valve. Father didn't like to go to church, he always said he felt too badly to go to church. He said he felt too badly to go to funerals. I recall one time he said, "Fan," (He called my mother Fan.), "I wish you'd go to that funeral in Lexington; my cousin Captain Steel died." Mother said, "Ash, I'm sick and tired of going to your family's funerals." He said, "Fan, I just feel entirely too badly to go to that funeral." So mother said, "Well, what will you give me to go to that funeral?" Father said, "I'll give you one hundred dollars." Mother said, "I'll go." I'd heard this conversation; so when Mother said, "James, will you drive me to Lexington for a funeral?" I said, "Mother, what will you give me?" She said, "Ten dollars." I said, "I'll go."

To get back to Dr. Preston—to me he was a very remarkable man. He left me his surgical instruments and ... his library which dated from 1870 up until about 1931 or 1940. It was he who aroused my interest in neurosurgery. When I came home from medical school, I used to make rounds with him to see his patients and watch him operate. He was Chief of Staff at the Memorial Hospital in Lynchburg.

... [W]e lived in the same house until father's death in 1937, and then Mother moved to an apartment on Rivermont Avenue that was a newer part of town.

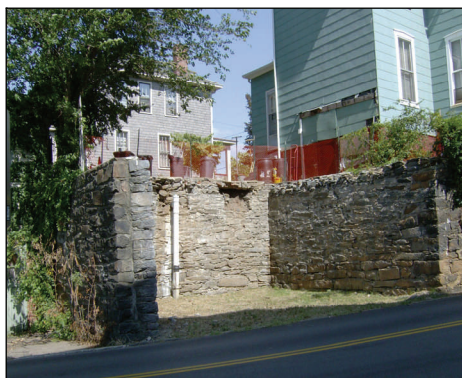
I never had a job [as a boy]. Father was satisfied if I made good grades in school and he was very dissatisfied if I didn't, and he had real good ways of showing it. When I was in college and wanted to borrow the family car, when I had girls up to the dances, if I was doing well in school, he allowed me to have it. If I didn't do well in school he'd say, "James, I think you are running around too much, you are not studying," and I didn't get the car. He never would give me an allowance. I said, "Why, Father?" He said, "Well, I gave your mother an allowance and she just spends it, and then when that runs out she overdraws her account at the bank." ... I had to ask him each time I wanted some money, and I'd ask him usually at the time of the dances.

Dr. Preston, our family physician, aroused my interest in neurosurgery and it came about like so many things do—you know somebody that knows somebody ... [O]ne of our neighbors on Washington Street was Henry Christian. Dr. Christian was chairman of the Department of Medicine at Harvard and Chief at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital. Steven Watts went to Randolph Macon College in Ashland near Richmond with Henry Christian and Dr. Preston was a cousin of Henry Christian. Dr. Preston asked me if I'd ever thought of going into neurosurgery and I said I hadn't thought about it, but it sounded interesting. There was a story told that when Dr. Adson was asked by Dr. Mayo to start a neurosurgical service in Rochester at the Mayo Clinic, he said that he did not know whether there was a need for another neurosurgeon because there were already *four* neurosurgeons in the United States.

[Before going to Germany to study] I proposed to Julia and asked for her hand, got her agreement to be married. ... The announcement appeared in the Lynchburg, Richmond, Baltimore and New York papers. Both of our families were prominent in Lynchburg, but what made our engagement of national interest was that there were two Harrison Presidents of the United States. ... After our wedding we went to Breslau, Germany, where Professor Otfried Foerster had his clinic.

I take nearly everything seriously and so instead of doing like some couples do and go away for a weekend or take a day off to get married, I came home a month before the wedding and went to parties for about a month before we were married. We sent out about a thousand invitations and we had eight bridesmaids and eight groomsmen. The wedding was at nine o'clock at night in the St. Paul's Church in white tie and tails. Julia's parents had been members for many years, Julia attended and I joined St. Paul's when I was at ... VMI. We had a big wedding but the reception was small. This was in Julia's home; just a few friends were invited. But speaking of Prohibition, I know you've heard of this, but we actually drank champagne from Julia's slipper and it was really rather a gay party, but the Harrisons didn't serve any hard liquor. But I had a VMI classmate who lived across the street, Charlie Burroughs, and Charlie said, "I've got five gallons of corn liquor over here and if anybody wants some, they can just come over and get what they want." And so, a good many of the groomsmen went over and got some corn liquor and one of them was my brother Hubert. We had to put Hubert to bed before we went to the station that night on the way to New York

My oldest son, Winston, is in the medical supply business, works for General Medical as a Hospital Specialist, and my younger son Randy is a lawyer, a partner in a law firm, and is really now running the law firm; so it's gratifying to see that the boys are finally growing up and getting to be responsible citizens. Of course ... it's great having grandchildren. ... Each one of my sons has a son and a daughter. I think in the children and grandchildren one sees a continuity of himself.



Redd family's garage on Grace Street before demolition.

Site after demolition.

City demolishes Grace St. garage

During April, city inspectors notified Henry Redd and his wife at 713 Pearl Street that their garage fronting on Grace Street had developed severe structural problems and would have to be either repaired or demolished. The flooring in the two-story structure had collapsed and the front wall of the building facing Grace Street was bowing out. Mr. and Mrs. Redd are elderly and Henry is in poor health.

Building Commissioner Bob Drane met with Mr. and Mrs. Redd and they told him they were obtaining estimates. Since the owners were unable to either repair or demolish the building, the city closed Grace Street for a day and demolished the garage.

As a result, our historic district lost another piece of Diamond Hill history. Even though the building was not being used as a garage, it was an unusual dependency that added interest to Grace Street. Now Grace Street is left with a gaping hole and a very solid stone wall that extends out to the very edge of the narrow street. If the driver who recently demolished the utility pole on Grace Street across from the garage had crashed into that wall instead, he would probably not have survived.

Removal of the garage exposed areas on the back of the Redd's house where the garage was attached to it. Along the top of the 10-foot foundation wall (see photo), the city installed an orange plastic fence which draws attention to the stone foundation and the white sewer line. Is there—somewhere—an organization that would be willing to replace that plastic fence with something safer and more attractive? It's unfortunate that this family, who maintained their property so attractively for decades, is left with these problems.

New owner of 1301 Madison dies

During early September Robert C. Fortune, who bought the Chesley Hardy House from Donald R. Lee in April, died unexpectedly.

New members

A hearty "Welcome" to Terry Keenan and Sally Bruce who recently became DHHS members. Terry and Sally reside at 1306 Madison Street.



Don't blame the dogs!

Diamond Hill is a great place to stroll with your dog, and many of us take advantage of the opportunity. But a few—very few—are also taking advantage of their neighbors, by not cleaning up after their dogs. City ordinances require it. Enough said!

Oct. Meeting

Tues., Oct.7
7:30 p.m.

at the

Walter G Jones House
(c.1887)
601 Pearl St.

Hosts: Katheryn and Hampton
Brown

