

Rockville Loses Two Landmarks

Summer 2009 marks the loss of two nineteenth-century Rockville landmarks: the famed Chestnut Lodge main building and Burbank's Luncheonette, the last remnant of the City's traditional commercial center. Chestnut Lodge was destroyed by fire in the early morning hours of June 7. Burbank's was demolished by its owner on July 25, following a fire in 2003 and six-year period of vacancy and deterioration.

Originally the Woodlawn Hotel (1889), Chestnut Lodge was listed in the National Register of Historic Places and was slated for redevelopment as luxury residential condominiums. Burbank's opened in the early 1890s as a general store and later operated as a restaurant until 2003. The City's 1986 Historic Resources Management Plan documented Burbank's role in Rockville's commercial development, and in 2008, the Historic District Commission recommended historic district designation for the property. The measure, however, failed to secure a majority vote by the City Council.

The cause of the Chestnut Lodge fire remains under police investigation. Chestnut Lodge Properties has not announced future development plans for the site. There are also no plans for



Top: Woodlawn Hotel shortly after its reopening as Chestnut Lodge Sanitarium, 1910. Photograph by Reed Brothers, Peerless Rockville collection.

building on the Burbank's site. The loss of these two buildings is almost incalculable, according to Mary van Balgooy, Peerless' Executive Director. Peerless encourages residents to share their memories, photographs, and stories about Chestnut Lodge and Burbank's as a way of commemorating our lost heritage. The City's tribute to Chestnut Lodge is being broadcast on Rockville 11.

Bottom left: Built in the 1890s by Thomas Dawson, this building was in continuous use for more than 110 years and has served as a general store, various service and sales operations, and most recently, as Burbank's.



Chestnut Lodge Bricks

Would you like to own a piece of history? Peerless Rockville is making bricks available to the community from the historic Chestnut Lodge building for a suggested donation of \$20 per brick. For more information, please see the back page.

Cemetery Preservation Workshops

Peerless Rockville, the Coalition to Protect Maryland Burial Sites, and Historic Takoma will be hosting two preservation workshops for cemetery owners, caretakers, and historians. The sessions will cover cemetery preservation planning, stone cleaning and repair, landscaping issues, and best practices for the conservation of historic cemeteries.

The two sessions are identical and will be held on Saturday, October 10 and Saturday, December 5 from 9:00 am until 12:00 noon at the Red Brick Courthouse with a visit to the nearby Baptist Cemetery.

Each session is free, but limited to 35 participants. Registration is required.

For more information or to register, contact Peerless Rockville at 301-762-0096 or info@peerlessrockville.org.

This project has been financed in part by the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission Grant Fund which is administered by the HPC and the Montgomery County Planning Board of the M-NCPPC.



Above: Headstone of Samuel Clark Veirs in the Baptist Cemetery.

Below: The award-winning restored Frieda's Cottage.



Preservation Awards for Frieda's Cottage

Peerless Rockville is pleased to receive two awards recently for the restoration of Frieda's Cottage. In May, the Maryland Historical Trust presented Peerless with an award for project excellence in the restoration and rehabilitation of Frieda's Cottage. The awards, presented annually, honor outstanding achievements in historic preservation, museums, education, and related fields and represent the best of preservation in Maryland.

In June, Peerless received another award from Montgomery Preservation, Inc. for excellence for the rehabilitation of Frieda's Cottage and recognized the valuable contribution Peerless made to historic preservation in Montgomery County. We are very proud of these two awards and thank everyone who helped make this possible.

Montgomery County Community Service Day

Saturday, October 24

8-10 am, Baptist Cemetery

9 am-noon, Montrose Schoolhouse

News & Notes

Thank you to:

Summer collections interns **Katherine Hughes**, a graduate student in the Arts and Museum Studies program at Georgetown University, **Brendan Jordan** (Wootton HS) and **Sam Margolis** (Richard Montgomery HS).

Welcome New Board Members:

Steve Morris, a scientist working for the federal government and **Bethany Portner**, an interior designer.

New Preservation Manager:

Lorin Farris joins Peerless as our new preservation manager. Lorin has extensive experience in preservation, research, and fundraising.

Support Peerless Rockville through our Planned Giving Program: If you share our vision, help it happen by adding Peerless Rockville to your end-of-life planning. By investing in Peerless' future, you can help to keep Rockville's heritage preserved. For more information, contact Mary van Balgooy, Executive Director at director@peerlessrockville.org or 301-762-0096.

Preservation Awards: Did you miss our annual preservation awards ceremony? You can catch a recap of the ceremony on Rockville 11.

Grant Award: In June, Peerless was the recipient of an Institute of Museum and Library Services **Connecting to Collections Bookshelf** award. Valued at \$800, the Bookshelf consists of reference books related to the care of museum collections.

Congratulations: The Montgomery County Board of Education voted unanimously to name its newest elementary school in Clarksburg after **William B. Gibbs, Jr.**, who was a principal at Rockville Colored Elementary School when he successfully fought for pay equity for African American teachers during the 1930s.

Peerless Places

224 Elizabeth Avenue

Historic preservation means different things to different people. In the end, however, it's about saving something—a house, building, cemetery, ruin—because it's important to the community. A house, for example, may be important to save because of its architectural style, its association with a prominent person or group, or its connection with an historic event. Sometimes the significance of a site is not always apparent, such as the house at 224 Elizabeth Avenue in Lincoln Park. When an adjacent church requested a permit in 2009 to demolish the house to make a parking lot, the Historic District Commission reviewed the request as required. The exterior of the house didn't suggest it was historic. But in the public hearings, community members of Lincoln Park shared their memories and revealed that what is remarkable about this house is not its style or who lived there but *how* it got there.

The story begins with Harrison and Frances Ricks. In 1930, the Ricks started purchasing property in Lincoln Park. They built a theater for the community (African Americans were segregated at the town's Milo Theatre) on the north side of Frederick Avenue and a small grocery store nearby. By 1949, the Ricks had accumulated several mortgages so they sold their properties to Oliver W. Madden. For a few years, the theater stood empty.

Letha E. Payton, a mother of thirteen children, had emigrated from Greenville, North Carolina to the Rockville area in search of work. When she found a job, she sent for her mother and eight of her children to live with her. When living arrangements with another family did not work out, Payton and her family moved into the abandoned movie theater. It is not clear who let her live there but the theater served as the family's home for approximately two years. The family used the lobby area as a kitchen and the two projector rooms as their bedrooms.

In 1952, Madden sold the properties, including the theater, to Lenmor



Corporation, who planned to remodel the building into apartments. The Payton family would have to move. To ease their burden, Morris Stern, a director of the company and owner of Stern Furniture, offered the grocery store as a house for the family on the condition they move it to a new location.

With financial assistance from her brothers and Mount Calvary Baptist Church members, Payton was able to purchase a lot for the house. Community leaders Jim Davis, John Jones, and Nelson Cooper led the effort to lay a foundation, move the house, and build an addition on the front.

Payton lived in the house with her family until 1959 when she sold her property to Robert Snowden and moved to Baltimore.

Other community leaders, such as Irene Snowden and Rupert Curry lived in the house at one time but the story of how the Lincoln Park community transformed this house into a home for the Payton family makes it especially significant and historic.

On October 12, the Mayor and Council will determine whether or not to designate the house as an historic district. Peerless encourages citizens to write a letter, send an email, or attend the meeting to show support. And if you have any memories about this house that you would like to share, please contact Peerless Rockville.

Virginia Cooper, daughter of Letha Payton, remembers her grandmother sitting in her rocking chair inside the house as Obie Moore drove the tractor with the house in tow down Frederick Avenue to Elizabeth Avenue.

The Peerless Places series highlights Rockville's historic sites. Contact us for more information.

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Mission

Peerless Rockville safeguards and promotes Rockville's past by preserving buildings, spaces, objects, and information important to our city's heritage. Peerless Rockville advances its goals through education, example, advocacy, and community involvement.

Contact Us

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Surf, Point, Click, and Discover at peerlessrockville.org

Hours

Resource Center,
Library and Peerless Store:
Monday-Friday,
10 am-1 pm
and by appointment
Office:
Monday-Friday,
9 am-3 pm

2009-2010

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Historic Chestnut Lodge Bricks

Bricks from historic Chestnut Lodge are available to the community from Peerless Rockville as mementos.

SUGGESTED DONATION of \$20.00 per brick to support the Eileen McGuckian Preservation Fund that will be used for future rescue, restoration, and advocacy of historic sites.

Bricks will be delivered to your doorstep or near your driveway between September 15-30. If you need special arrangements, please call (301) 762-0096.

Send order form to Peerless Rockville by **September 12, 2009**

_____ Brick(s) @ \$20.00 each Total Enclosed \$ _____

My check, payable to Peerless Rockville, is enclosed.
Please charge my Visa MasterCard American Express Discover

Account No.: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Authorized Signature: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

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