

## *Genevieve B. Wimsatt, 1912-2011*

### *An Appreciation*

With the passing of Genevieve Wimsatt this summer, Rockville and Peerless lost an ardent admirer. Genevieve was a traditional, proper lady, a progressive thinker, and a warm, elegant individual who never hesitated to get involved.

Genevieve came from a line of feisty women. Her great-grandparents, Matthew and Rebecca Fields, from 1855 to 1930 published the *Montgomery County Sentinel*. In 1939 her mother, Elizabeth Rebecca Fields, and aunt picketed the site of the new Post Office because the federal government took the *Sentinel* property to build it.

In 1924, Genevieve and her mother moved to the Fields farm in Rockville (now part of the King Farm development). Graduating from Central High School in D.C. at age 14, she then earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in economics at the George Washington University. In 1934 Genevieve began a 36-year career in the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Genevieve loved to travel. Before trips she studied language, culture, and architecture, returning from each adventure with art, artifacts, and new interests. In 1970, Genevieve purchased a townhouse in New Mark Commons, which she furnished with family antiques, travel treasures, and modern art.

From a family who shaped Rockville, Genevieve treasured our city's history. Seeing the need for an organization that would rescue historic places, in 1974 Genevieve became a charter member of Peerless Rockville. She regaled us with tales of stuffing the Rockville Academy stove with paper to cancel school and of meeting the evening train (with its eligible bachelors).

Genevieve brought more than quaint stories to Peerless Rockville. She initiated



*The Peer*, a publication in the broadsides format of her Fields ancestors. As president of Peerless from 1976-78, she helped rescue the B&O Railroad Station by tirelessly convincing WMATA, public officials, commuters, and anyone who would listen of its value. She negotiated contracts and scrubbed floors in the deteriorated building while preparing for its move out of the path of Metro. She helped Peerless decide to purchase Montrose School. Genevieve's legacies to the young organization included economic sense, attention to detail, intergenerational synergy, and grace under pressure. Over the next four decades, Genevieve donated funds and artifacts to bolster Peerless projects and collections.

Genevieve served on the Civic Improvement Advisory Commission and Rockville Planning Commission. She also took the helm at the Montgomery County Historical Society and brought family items for the time capsule at King Farm. Moving to Asbury Village in her 80s, she organized a new library and TV station and wrote articles for the campus newspaper.

We are proud to have known and worked with her. And Peerless is all the more because of Genevieve Wimsatt.

*Genevieve Wimsatt explains to John Harter of Channel 7 News why the station must be preserved, 1978.*

# Annual Report

This past fiscal year was a busy and exciting time for Peerless Rockville. Your generous support has enabled Peerless to protect, preserve, and celebrate Rockville's heritage. We could not have done it without you. Thank you!

## Preservation

Preserving places, objects, and information important to Rockville's heritage is key to the mission of Peerless Rockville. This year, Peerless' major accomplishments included:

- Nominating Glenview Farm for local historic designation.
- Advocating against changing the historic name of East Middle Lane to Choice Hotels Lane (and we won!).
- Historian Teresa Lachin producing a draft publication of Recent Past resources in Rockville.
- Cataloguing approximately 94 new acquisitions into the museum collection.
- Cataloguing Peerless' large collection of urban renewal materials and architect John Sullivan's photographs, drawings, plans, and articles.
- Digitizing over 950 photographs in the museum collection.
- Developing a commemorative ornament of the Red Brick Courthouse as a reminder of the places that make Rockville a special community.



Over 19 active volunteers assisted Peerless on a weekly basis giving over 1,060 volunteer hours to the organization.



Historian Erik Ledbetter leads a tour about Rockville's Trolley Line.

## Education

Exploring Rockville's past through a variety of educational programs remains a central goal of Peerless Rockville. Altogether, we sponsored, presented, and participated in approximately 24 events in fiscal year 2011. While some tours and lectures were associated with other organizations and the City, Peerless also developed and offered its own programs and events including:

- A different walking tour the first Saturday of every month from February to June.
  - New walking tours about Rockville's "many" downtowns and "death and dying in Rockville".
  - Major events such as an 1860s Baseball Game Demonstration and Peerless' annual Preservation Awards Ceremony and New Year's Day Brunch.
  - Presentations on F. Scott Fitzgerald, Chestnut Lodge, and "Women Who Dared".
- A presentation on Rockville's Trolley Line with a tour of the renovated National Capital Trolley Museum.
  - A cemetery workshop for Richard Montgomery High School students to gain hands-on preservation experience.
  - Creating and installing a permanent exhibit at the Pump House consisting of reproduction photographs of Rockville during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
  - Establishing and increasing our Facebook and Twitter activity.

## Community Service

Providing community service also plays a significant role in the daily operations of Peerless Rockville. This past year, Peerless:

- Responded to 121 research requests from the public.
- Offered several opportunities to Rockville residents for hands-on preservation experience, community service, and administrative and collections activities.
- Supervised and trained six school students in preservation and museum tasks so they could meet their Student Service Learning requirement.



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**\*Indicates donor gave multiple gifts to a specific fund.**

The Peerless Places series highlights Rockville's heritage. 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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