

Annual Meeting, Election, & Presentation

Join Peerless Rockville on Tuesday, June 14 at 7 pm at the Thomas Farm Community Center, 700 Falls Grove Drive, for our annual business meeting and election (see page 2 for the Nominating Committee Report). Following the meeting and election, members and the public are invited to hear a special presentation by Erik Ledbetter on the history of Rockville's trolley line.

From 1900 to 1935, street cars plied the track from the Washington, DC terminus at Wisconsin and M Streets, NW up through Rockville on the Rockville Pike and Montgomery Avenue to Laird Street and back again. In 1929, the trolley ran 24 trips a day between 6:30 am and 12:30 am to connect Rockville and Washington.

Both the meeting and illustrated presentation are free. For more information, visit PeerlessRockville.org or call 301-762-0096.



Major stops along the trolley line included Georgetown, Bethesda, Montrose, Halpine, Courthouse Square, and Chestnut Lodge. Six switching stations and side tracks enabled street cars to pass as they went in different directions. In populated areas, street cars kept speeds to 12 mph (6 mph at intersections), but in open country they could get up to 40 mph.

Peerless Rockville Preservation Awards



Since 1979, Peerless Rockville has recognized outstanding achievement in the design, maintenance, and preservation of Rockville's built environment and exemplary contributions to Rockville's quality of life through the Peerless Rockville Preservation Awards program. The program honors those individuals, organizations, institutions, and businesses whose projects, activities, or programs contribute to the City of Rockville's architectural character and/or cultural heritage.

If you know of a worthy project, please contact Peerless Rockville and let us know. Nominations are due September 1, 2011. Winners will be recognized at Peerless' Awards ceremony in October which includes a presentation by historian Teresa Lachin who will speak about her new booklet: "Rockville's Recent Past."

For an application or more information, please visit PeerlessRockville.org or call 301-762-0096.

The U.S. Pharmacopeia building is one of Peerless Rockville's 2010 award recipients for outstanding new design and construction. Completed in the fall of 2008, the building is located at Twinbrook Parkway and Fishers Lane.

Nominating Committee Report

The Nominating Committee, chaired by past president Joan Zenzen, recommends the following persons for service on the Board of Directors. Additional, written nominations may be filed with the secretary any time through June 14.

For election to a new two-year term as Officer, July 2011-June 2013: **Secretary: Tom Moore**, an attorney with an interest in historic preservation.

To fill three vacancies on the Board of Directors, terms to expire June 30, 2013: **Stephen Morris**, a scientist working for the federal government with experience in the renovation of historic homes; **Patty Neame**, conference assistant at World Bank Group; Board member since 2006; and chair of Communications/Marketing Committee; and **Patricia Wolff**, a lobbyist working for the American Farm Bureau Federation with an interest in advocacy and an affection for Rockville.

Remaining on the Board, with terms ending in June 2012 are Richard Stoner, Erik Ledbetter, Jane Hoddinott, John Hall, Jr., Patrice Lucid, Mary Lynn Scott, and Nancee Simonson.

Retiring from the Board is Bethany Portner.



Above: Dora Higgins, c. 1865. Dora's family faced great difficulties as a result of their Unionist views, which resulted in her husband's arrest by Confederate troops. Learn more about Dora's experience during the Civil War by visiting PeerlessRockville.org. Photograph courtesy of the Montgomery County Historical Society.

Right: Richard Montgomery HS student Joie Chang (center) cleans a gravestone in the historic Baptist Cemetery with the help of Caroline Tyson, Robert Mosko, Briana Alterman, and Isabel Blooston.

News & Notes

New Online Exhibit: Visit our Civil War exhibit on PeerlessRockville.org to read about the experiences of four Rockville citizens and how the Civil War changed their lives. The exhibit was made possible by a generous grant from the Rockville Rotary Club Foundation.

Thank you to: Erik Ledbetter, Eileen McGuckian, and Max van Balgooy for generously volunteering their time this past year to conduct tours on Rockville's history. We really appreciate it!

Baptist Cemetery Maintenance Workshop: A big thanks to students of the Richard Montgomery High School Archaeology Club that participated in a workshop at historic Baptist Cemetery: **Briana Alterman, Isabel Blooston, Joie Chang, and Caroline Tyson**. Special thanks to **Robert Mosko** of Mosko Cemetery Monument Services for providing his professional expertise in repairing a gravestone and teaching the students about cemetery maintenance.

Lincoln Park Community Day: On Saturday, June 25 and Sunday, June 26, Lincoln Park will host various activities and events for the public to enjoy including a parade and guided walking tour on African Americans who marched through Rockville during the Civil War. For more information, please contact the Lincoln Park Historical Foundation at 301-251-2747 or email lincolnparkhist@aol.com.



Peerless Places

Rockville Embraces Urban Renewal

Looking back through time in Peerless Rockville's collection of urban renewal records provides one a curious glimpse into the history of Rockville. Like time-lapse photography the images of old streets, buildings and beloved businesses fade and change into new plans and construction sites. The old business district with its traditional mix of shops, homes and commercial areas quickly vanishes, to be replaced with modern high rise buildings, underground parking and an enclosed shopping mall. History tells us that "renewal" in Rockville did not live up to expectations, and for the last fifty years downtown Rockville has undergone many attempts to recreate the town center.

From our vantage point in 2011, it is easy to question the motives, designs and actions of the past, to wonder why the City chose to make such drastic changes to the heart of downtown. However, the progressive leaders in office in 1959 were not looking back; their view was to a bright future for Rockville with lofty goals of transforming the city into a thriving commercial center and modern county seat. Rockville experienced growing pains in the period after World War II, during which the population grew from 2,047 residents in 1940 to 26,090 in 1960. The historic downtown struggled to keep pace with the needs of the population, and records indicate that obsolete buildings and archaic lot patterns made redevelopment difficult.

A 1959 study recognized that the central business area suffered from traffic jams, parking shortages and the loss of retail establishments. The Master Plan from 1960 labeled the downtown area of Rockville a "separate planning problem in itself" and proposed that the area between Jefferson Street, Middle Lane, North Washington Street and Hungerford Drive be redeveloped. The Mayor and Council believed that a revitalized downtown was important to the future of Rockville and



they looked toward urban renewal as a solution for the growing problem.

In 1962, a preliminary Urban Renewal Plan was drafted with goals to: prevent the spread of blight, permit rehabilitation and redevelop commercial areas. The impact on the city would be significant with the total renewal area encompassing some forty-six acres in the heart of downtown. One hundred families and individuals, along with 150 businesses, were relocated from the Mid-City area. Roads that had served the city for generations like East Montgomery Avenue, Commerce Lane and Sarah Street were rerouted or abandoned.

The City established design standards to guide the Mid-City development and the plan illustrated here was created to improve circulation of traffic, establish a retail center and create an identity for the city. This first vision of Rockville was never realized as changes to the Plan led to the adoption of a new design by Philadelphia architect Robert L. Geddes. City officials believed that the development could be complete by the end of 1969; however the plan proved too ambitious for the time and met with many obstacles. Today, few reminders exist of that first wave of urban renewal, the failed Rockville Mall was itself demolished, and another vision for Town Center has emerged.

This sketch of the original plan by local architect Donald Coupard was presented to the public in 1962; it included a pedestrian mall, department store, office buildings and a theater. Sketch from City of Rockville Newsletter, December 1962.

Written by Nancy Pickard, a Peerless Rockville intern and graduate student in the University of Maryland's Historic Preservation Department.



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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

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2010–2011

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