Endangered Block, Endangered Mall  
Ashlin Smith

Since October of 1998 Preservation Piedmont has been concerned about the future of 101 through 111 East Main Street. Although Wachovia Bank, then owner of the buildings, did not have them “on the market” it became clear that the bank planned to sell. In order to learn more about the true condition of the buildings, Preservation Piedmont members Ashlin Smith, Doug Gilpin and Tripp Pollard requested a tour of their interiors last December. Subsequently Gilpin, an architect well-known and respected in the field of preservation, wrote an analysis of the buildings and incorporated some of his observations of the interiors.

101-105 East Main Street: The Allegree-Flannagan Building is a good example of early twentieth-century mixed retail and residential use. The building was constructed in 1916 and is one of a small group of extant twentieth-century buildings representing the use of fine pressed brick and stone window sills, continuous lintels and string courses. The façade is capped with a series of brick corbels. In spite of some water damage, the interior retains much of its original character-defining elements, such as plaster walls and wood trimwork. The original layout of corridors connecting rooms and the larger living rooms overlooking Main Street provided the best natural illumination and ventilation.

109-111 East Main Street: The Farish-Driscoll Building of 1892 is an excellent example of late Victorian commercial architecture and probably one of the nicest second/third floor façades in downtown Charlottesville. It too has pressed brick, but of an even finer quality than that in the Allegree-Flannagan Building, and at the third-floor windows decorative masonry techniques were used, such as radial arches and terra cotta imposts at the bases of the arches. Again, stone is used for the sills and lintels. This Romanesque Revival style, used across the nation in post offices, courthouses and libraries, is not commonly incorporated in smaller commercial structures. This is unique to Charlottesville. The interior of 111 East Main still retains its special late Victorian mouldings and room arrangements. Cast-iron fronted coal stove fireplaces are still in the front parlors overlooking the street.

As a result of these observations, Preservation Piedmont board members consider the East Main Street buildings to be important contributors to the local historic designation of the downtown mall, as well as its Virginia Landmarks and National Register status. We are opposed to their demolition as proposed by the new owner, Lee Danielson. Instead, the buildings are considered to be worthy candidates for rehabilitation as part of a larger scheme that could include additions to the old buildings along with new buildings of mixed use.

Although this would seem more expensive for the new owner, it appears more reasonable when Historic Preservation Tax Credits are considered. Starting in 2000, combined federal and state tax credits for rehabilitation of certified historic structures will amount to 45% of the cost of work such as foundation repair, structural repair, masonry repair, plaster and woodwork repair, and other construction costs directly related to rehabilitation.

If demolition is allowed, construction of a new massive building, as proposed, would interrupt the rhythm of the smaller late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings that so characterizes the downtown mall. If demolition occurs next year, it could happen again. This then is the most important reason to save and rehabilitate the buildings. They are an essential part of the historic streetscape that makes Charlottesville’s downtown unique for the Piedmont.
Preservation in Albemarle County  
Ashlin Smith

An historic preservation plan and ordinance is now in the hands of the Albemarle County Planning Commission. After the November 23 work session the commission will next hold a public hearing and decide whether to recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve or deny the plan and ordinance.

The proposed ordinance has been patiently prepared since May 1995 by a group of local citizens appointed by the Supervisors. This group has been in dialogue with other citizens through many public hearings. The resulting proposal is sensitive to local concerns and is not intrusive.

The ordinance would:
1) Establish a process for creating historic overlay districts. This type of rezoning may next be initiated by owners of historic property, the Planning Commission, or the Board of Supervisors. The designation process would require notice to the landowners and the general public and public hearings before the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.
2) Encourage owners of historic buildings to consider alternatives to demolition. Approval by an Architectural Review Board (ARB) would be necessary for demolition or a bona fide offer to sell the building made without any takers.
3) Require exterior changes to historic property in an Historic Overlay District be reviewed by the ARB. This would include changes such as adding or removing parts of the building.
4) Give the ARB an advisory role in reviewing land use applications for property within or next to an Historic Overlay District. This review would take place during the normal course of development review and help protect landowners in an overlay district from insensitive development.

In contrast to many other historic and design control ordinances, this plan would:
1) Allow landowners in Albemarle County historic overlay districts to build new freestanding structures such as garages, barns, and sheds without review by the ARB.
2) Allow landowners to paint exteriors within the overlay district without review by the ARB.
3) Not require landowners to maintain historic properties, which could lead to demolition by neglect. The citizens committee chose not to create financial hardship which might occur in some cases.

Preservation Piedmont strongly supports a preservation plan and ordinance for Albemarle County. Many of its historic resources have already been lost. It is hoped that next year’s decision will save Albemarle’s remaining historic resources for the new millenium.

The Old Jail and Jailer’s House  
Ashlin Smith

In recent years, the Albemarle County jail complex has become a special place for area citizens participating in the annual Spirit Walk presented by the Albemarle County Historical Society. Evening visits to the site during the Halloween season have centered around the dramatic retelling of the Samuel McCue hanging in 1905. Consequently, the Society has increased public awareness of the importance of the jail in county and city history.

According to Fred Heblich, a local attorney who is researching the jail’s history, “Between November and February the Daily Progress and the Richmond Times-Dispatch reported on the case almost every day. As the efforts by McCue to avoid the gallows failed (appeals, petitions for clemency, etc.), the public fascination with details of impending execution increased.” Heblich goes on to say, “When the hanging was over, Charlottesville breathed a sigh of relief. For almost six months it had been the center of what we call today a media circus.”

As a result of Charlottesville’s experience with the McCue execution, in 1908 the state legislature abolished hangings and all local executions. There are also excellent jail records over a long period of time about the number of prisoners, their identities, their offenses, their periods of incarceration and much more. This information was reported at every term of circuit court by the Sheriff. A description of operations at the local complex during the turn of the century was written by three UVa sociology professors in The Jails of Virginia, published in 1933.

The architectural history of the jail is equally interesting. In 1875 the county Board of Supervisors accepted George Wallace Spooner’s plans for the new jail. Mr. Spooner (1820-1904) was a respected builder in the area who followed his father, George Wilson Spooner in the construction business. He built Mount Zion Baptist Church on Ridge Street and was commissioned to reconstruct the Rotunda at the University after the fire of 1895. He later lost that job to New York architect Stanford White when construction problems developed. Spooner was made city manager in 1892.

The jail he built was known as Albemarle County Jail No. 5. Stone and ironwork from an older jail located next to the county courthouse was used in its construction. In 1886 Spooner built the brick jailer’s house. Later brick additions were made to the jail and jailer’s house, with possible changes in the perimeter wall. A prize-winning study of the jail by two of Edward Lay’s students in the School of Architecture at UVa provides definitive information and measured drawings and is deposited in the Library of Congress. Professor Lay has said, “The jail’s infrastructural fabric, such as its cells and massive stone and brick walls are unique.” Others have said quite simply that this is what a jail should look like.

See Jail on next page.
Welcome to New Board Members

Mary Hill Caperton and Gertrude Fraser were appointed to the Board of Preservation Piedmont at the Annual Meeting on December 5 as new members. Pryor Hale, Jodie Webber and Jim Wootton were appointed for a second two-year term. Mary Hill is a business owner and an old friend of Preservation Piedmont. Gertrude Fraser is a resident of Ridge Street and teaches Anthropology at the University of Virginia. Many thanks to Mary Gilliam and Joan Woodfolk for their contributions to the board over the last two years. There is one vacancy on the board, which the board will fill at its January meeting.

Preservation Piedmont
Membership Form

Name: ____________________________________________

Street: ____________________________________________

City, State, Zip: ______________________________________

Phone: ___________________________ Email: ___________________________

The year shown on the mailing label indicates the calendar year for which your dues have been paid. If not ‘00, your dues are due on January 1, 2000. If your membership has expired, please renew it now to ensure that you receive future mailings.

___ Student $5    ___ Individual $10    ___ Family $20    ___ Patron $100    ___ Life $300

___ Non-Profit Organization $25    ___ Business $50    ___ Business Patron $300

___ New Member    ___ Membership Renewal

Please make dues payable to Preservation Piedmont and mail to

Preservation Piedmont
P.O. Box 2803
Charlottesville, VA 22902

We Need Your Support! Please Join Today! Thank You!

Preservation Piedmont considers the social and architectural history to be a strong case for the preservation and rehabilitation of the jail complex as part of the Court Square development, and that it should be made visible and accessible to the public. Preservation Piedmont members will participate in the community dialogue as the new and enlarged Court Square Study Committee re-examines the area and plans for the new century.

See meeting announcement on page 4.

Welcome to New Board Members

Mary Hill Caperton and Gertrude Fraser were appointed to the Board of Preservation Piedmont at the Annual Meeting on December 5 as new members. Pryor Hale, Jodie Webber and Jim Wootton were appointed for a second two-year term. Mary Hill is a business owner and an old friend of Preservation Piedmont. Gertrude Fraser is a resident of Ridge Street and teaches Anthropology at the University of Virginia. Many thanks to Mary Gilliam and Joan Woodfolk for their contributions to the board over the last two years. There is one vacancy on the board, which the board will fill at its January meeting.
Preservation Awards
Helena Devereux

The local chapter of the Preservation Alliance of Virginia made its annual awards at its meeting on November 14th. Each year three awards are given: two for preservation/restoration projects and one to a person or group for work that helps promote preservation.

The award for preservation and restoration of a private dwelling was given to James B. Murray, Jr., for moving and restoring Mount Ida, which now stands in Keene, Virginia. The Madison County Historic Society received the award for preservation and restoration of a public building for its work on the Kemper House in Madison, Virginia. The Madison County Historic Society also effected an adaptive re-use of the Kemper House.

The Preservationists of the Year award was given to the Greene County Architectural Survey Group for the contribution it made to the heritage of Greene County by identifying and recording nearly 150 buildings which are significant to the county’s cultural history.

Welcome to New Members

Preservation Piedmont welcomes new members Mrs. Newby Day, Mr. James D. Stultz, Mr. and Mrs. Lucius Bracey, Jr., and Mr. and Mrs. William Abbot.

The Old Albemarle Jail:
Important Meeting January 6

The Charlottesville/Albemarle Courts Study Committee will hold a public meeting on Thursday, January 6, 2000. The meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Albemarle County Court House. This committee presented a proposal in June, 1999 which involved building a parking ramp on the site of the Old Jail, just off High Street. The committee has since been expanded to include a representative from the surrounding neighborhood and representatives of the local Planning Commissions.

Come to the January meeting to find out the current status of the plans and to voice your opinion.