Challenges, 2000: A Year End Report

Ashlin Smith

Early in the year Preservation Piedmont foresaw its active participation in major preservation issues before the city of Charlottesville and Albemarle County, and although crucial decisions have now been made in favor of historic preservation by both city and county, the outcome of these decisions is not yet clear.

**Charlottesville Downtown Mall**

Preservation Piedmont will continue to monitor the implementation of combined renovation and new building at 101 through 111 East Main Street. The city BAR denied a demolition permit to D & R Development last summer and City Council ultimately agreed to partial demolition. Throughout the process Preservation Piedmont recommended that this group of late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings be adaptively reused because they are contributing structures in the center of an Historic District.

A recommendation to review the city’s entire Historic Design Control Ordinance should be included in the new comprehensive plan. Clarification of the section on demolition is especially needed because of varying interpretations related to the owner’s option to sell property after a demolition permit is denied.

**Albemarle County Historic Preservation Plan**

Preservation Piedmont has also supported from its inception the work of the Albemarle County Historic Preservation Committee and the plan that it finally presented to the county Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. The careful allowance for public input throughout the process made it a lengthy one but in the end a more acceptable one to county taxpayers. Preservation Piedmont congratulates the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors on voting unanimously to accept the Historic Preservation Plan in its entirety.

The Board has now instructed the Committee to implement its recommendations which 1) deal with surveying, compiling and documenting the county’s historic resources, and 2) obtaining and coordinating financial incentives for historic property owners through purchasing development rights, acquiring conservation easements, and establishing a technical advice program, a work bank program, and a revolving fund. Before a revolving fund can be established, enabling authority must come from the Virginia General Assembly. The Committee is already encouraging local representatives to the state legislature to sponsor a bill during the next session in Richmond.

**Courts System Study**

During the third public meeting recently sponsored by the Charlottesville/Albemarle Courts Study Committee, the community input pointed clearly to saving the historic jail complex and restoring the exterior of the Elks Club building (now the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court), and adapting the interior for Juvenile Domestic Relations office space. New construction at the northwest corner of Market and Ninth Streets could provide other court needs, including parking.

Whatever is decided, coordination with the Historic Court Square Committee’s recommendations is paramount. The city applied for and was awarded a federal TEA-21 grant to help fund new sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, bicycle storage, and removal of overhead wires. At the request of the city’s Department of Neighborhood Planning and Development, Preservation Piedmont wrote a letter of support for this improvement project to the Commonwealth Transportation Board.

**Additional Letters of Support**

There have been other letters written in support of preservation this year.

**Scottsville:** At the request of the vice mayor, a letter was written in support of the town’s Historic Streetscape Project. The federal TEA-21 funding that has since been awarded will help finance the undergrounding of power lines on Valley and Main Streets.

**Louisa County:** Still undecided is the fate of the R. Earl Ogg Memorial Building on Louisa Courthouse Square.

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Public input was requested by the *Central Virginian* newspaper, and Preservation Piedmont wrote a letter to the editor expressing support for preserving this substantial early twentieth century building honoring the memory of a prominent leader.

**Fluvanna County:** A citizens group in Fluvanna County asked Preservation Piedmont to write a letter to the Board of Supervisors concerning Tenaska Company’s request for a zoning change. This change would enable the company to build a new power plant in a rural setting which has supported large and small farms for three centuries, and has benefited from the scenic Rivanna River and the historic Rivanna Canal whose ruins of great stone locks are still visible reminders of its past. An increasing number of buildings in the county are being added to the Virginia and National Registers of Historic Places. The decision of the Fluvanna Board of Supervisors is now well known. Many letters and many voices against the zoning change seemed not to matter.

**Nelson County:** It was reported in our summer newsletter that Nelson County’s Board of Supervisors had voted to transfer title to the old Lovingston School property to a citizen corporation that would spearhead the renovation and expansion of the 1930s structure into a multi-use community center. Preservation Piedmont wrote a letter in support of the citizens’ proposal. More recently, $55,000 in federal funding has been provided and the school building has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Architect Stephen Von Storch will guide the renovation work according to the Register’s strict standards.

### Awards

The Thomas Jefferson Chapter of the APVA recently announced preservation awards for a Charlottesville organization and for an Albemarle county resident. The group award was presented to the city Board of Architectural Review in recognition of their outstanding effort this year to preserve the historic resources of the city.

Jim Eddins received the individual award in recognition of outstanding service to the county as chairman of the Albemarle County Historic Preservation Committee. He was also recognized for the restoration of his historic county home, Red Hills, and for his visionary leadership of Preservation Piedmont as its founding president in 1993.

The Albemarle County Historical Society has presented its highest award, the Nalle Book Award, to K. Edward Lay, author of *The Architecture of Jefferson Country*. This is not an annual award, and because of the comprehensiveness of Professor Lay’s work, the award included a gift of $5,000.

### Jefferson School

*Genevieve Keller*

A Preservation Piedmont committee of Julie Gronlund and Genevieve Keller has begun historic research and investigations of the Jefferson School located on Commerce Street between 4th and 5th Streets near the edge of the old Vinegar Hill neighborhood. The committee formed in response to requests from the community that Preservation Piedmont become aware of the historic resource value of the school.

Prior to desegregation of Charlottesville’s public schools, Jefferson School served as the city’s elementary school for African American students; until Burley School opened in the 1950s, it also served as a high school. The school and the adjacent Carver Recreation Center were for many years a major focus of activities associated with Charlottesville’s African American community. Since desegregation of Charlottesville’s schools in the 1960s, the school has had a number of educational uses. Owned by the Charlottesville School Board, the building currently houses the city’s preschool program and provides classroom and office space for other educational programs.

The Jefferson School committee has met with alumnae of the Jefferson High School and participated in the alumnae reunion during the Labor Day weekend. The committee, which is also working with the African American history program at Charlottesville High School, is exploring the possibility of a community tour of Jefferson School in late winter or spring of 2001. The committee has visited the building several times and prepared an initial draft narrative containing a brief history and architectural description of the building. Representatives of Preservation Piedmont have discussed the possibility of an historic designation for the school with representatives of city government and the Charlottesville school system. Preservation Piedmont invites the public to share information about Jefferson School, including photographs, letters, and other material related to its history. Anyone wishing to participate in this project, or to learn more about it, is encouraged to contact Preservation Piedmont.

### Welcome to New Members

Preservation Piedmont welcomes new members Ben Ford, Lorraine Wallenborn, Dr. White McK. Wallenborn, Elizabeth B. Waters, Mary B. McKinley, Carol W. Wilkin, Linda Winecoff and Wade Apartments, Charlottesville; David & Nancy Bass, Paul R. Brockman, Ralph & Charlotte Dammann, Mr. & Mrs. A.B. Davenport, Fred & Kitty Landess, Bill & Kathy Sublette, and George & Elizabeth Neff (life members), Albemarle County; and Ann Miller, Madison County.
New Officers and Board Members

Helena Devereux

At the Annual Meeting on December 3, Preservation Piedmont members approved a new slate of officers for the year 2001. Mary Hill Caperton will serve as President, Ashlin Smith as Vice-President, Clara Colby as Secretary, and Clarence McClymonds as Treasurer.

We also approved five new board members. Four vacancies on the board will be created at the end of the year 2000 with the completion of two terms by Helena Devereux, Julie Gronlund, Genevieve Keller, and Ed Lay. A fifth vacancy exists because of the resignation of Jim Wootton, who has taken a position in Richmond. The members approved the nomination of Ben Ford, Margaret Maliszewski, Lois McKenzie, Ann Miller, and Liz Sargent to fill these vacancies.

Ben Ford is a professional archaeologist who has his own business in Charlottesville. Through his work, he is in touch with preservation issues. He would like to become more involved in local preservation efforts.

Margaret Maliszewski is probably known to many of you as Margaret Pikart; she has recently married. A Design Planner for Albemarle County, she works in entrance corridor and historic preservation issues. She has previously worked in Washington, D.C., New York City, and in communities in Pennsylvania.

Lois McKenzie, who works at Monticello, is a founding member of Preservation Piedmont, and helped write the by-laws. She knows our organization well, and has several ideas for future projects.

Ann Miller has been a preservation consultant for over 20 years. She is the historian for the Virginia Department of Transportation and for the Orange County Historical Society. She lives in Madison County.

Liz Sargent is a landscape architect who received her degree from UVa. She currently works with a Charlottesville firm that focuses on the preservation of historic landscapes.

Preservation Piedmont welcomes these new board members and looks forward to working with them during the coming year!

Preservation Central, Inc.

Preservation Central, Inc. was incorporated in October 2000 to serve as a privately operated non-stock, non-profit corporation dedicated to the preservation of historic landmark buildings and sites in Central Virginia. Its service area includes Orange, Greene, Louisa, Fluvanna, Nelson, Amherst and Albemarle Counties, and the City of Charlottesville.

It will direct three programs: 1) The corporation will provide the opportunity for the owners of publicly and professionally recognized historic structures and sites to receive Federal and State income tax deductions in return for grants of easements which run “with the land” in perpetuity. 2) It will also raise a revolving fund to allow it to intervene in behalf of the preservation of historically significant properties which are threatened with either demolition or modifications that would destroy their historic character. 3) Preservation Central will solicit funds for use in making grants or affordable loans to owners of historic properties and sites who lack the needed financial resources to accomplish warranted preservation and restoration, and for whom the tax benefits of easements alone will not provide the needed financial incentives and resources.

Because an organization such as this has an educational component, it will extend internship opportunities in preservation to students at UVa and will encourage appropriate programs at PVCC and other institutions.

Questions and requests for further information may be addressed to Paul R. Brockman, Preservation Central, Inc., Box 240, North Garden, VA 22959 or call 977-3440.
Archaeological Resources in Charlottesville

Ben Ford

Over the past few years, several highly visible development projects within Charlottesville have adversely affected significant archaeological sites. Most recently, during construction of the new Marriott hotel on West Main Street between 12th and 12 1/2 Streets, workers dug through a rich layer of material culture from the nineteenth century. City insurance maps showed that at this location several domestic structures lined West Main Street during that period.

Due to the destructive nature of ongoing development, and because Charlottesville does not currently have a plan to assess, evaluate, or manage its known or unknown archaeological resources, a group of concerned citizens, including members of Preservation Piedmont, the Albemarle County Historical Society, the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities and the Archaeological Society of Virginia created an ad hoc committee to address this issue. The committee’s goal was to encourage Charlottesville to recognize the city’s diverse and extensive archaeological resources and to make recommendations for their future protection and management.

Since its inception in early spring, the committee has met once and maintained contact via phone and email. We formally presented our concerns in May to Jim Tolbert and several others of the Charlottesville Department of Neighborhood Planning and Development. They were generally supportive of our effort and suggested that it would be appropriate to make a presentation on the protection of archaeological resources to the Planning Committee. A draft was prepared but a date for its presentation has not yet been set. Most recently, the committee was contacted by the Department of Neighborhood Planning and Development to contribute to the current draft of the city’s Comprehensive Plan. The committee strongly suggested in subsequent editing and comments that the Comprehensive Plan make a formal recommendation to study the issue and ultimately take steps to rewrite the section on Historic Preservation in the City Code to specifically include the protection of archaeological resources.

It is our hope that with the public presentation of the Draft Comprehensive Plan, the issue of protecting Charlottesville’s archaeological resources will be debated more seriously both within and outside of city government. We plan to continue working closely with the Department of Neighborhood Planning and Development and other city organizations to reach our goals.