

# the Preservationist

Winter 2008

## Wright Shares Oral History Covering 20 Years of County Preservation



Former Historic Preservation Supervisor Gwen Marcus Wright is now Chief of Countywide Planning.

Former Historic Preservation Supervisor Gwen Marcus Wright has shared her experience of 20 years in Montgomery County in a two-hour oral history recorded with HPC commissioner David Rotenstein this past July. The interview has been transcribed and will be archived in the Historic Preservation Section office and a copy will be donated to Montgomery Preservation, Inc.

Education and professionalism were guiding principles of Wright's tenure in Montgomery County historic preservation. During the interview she recounted her efforts to educate members of the county council and planning board on the importance of historic preservation. "I viewed those early designation processes mainly as big education efforts. Not just for the citizens, but for our planning board and our council," she explained.

With undergraduate degrees in architecture and historic preservation from Yale University, Wright came to historic preservation after initially considering a career in architecture. Her intent after college was to move to Houston for a job with an architectural firm; instead, she ended up at the Historic Galveston Foundation, where she worked from 1979 to 1987 managing preservation easements and ensuring rehabilitation projects' sensitivity to historic properties.

Coming to Montgomery County in 1987, Wright eventually consolidated staff working in three county agencies on historic preservation issues into a single comprehensive program that supports the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission by reviewing historic area work permits, conducting research to identify historic properties for designation in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* and organizing community outreach. Historians, archaeologists, and interpretive staff working in county-owned historic sites also joined the comprehensive program Wright built.

It is a strong professional program that has earned credibility in the public and private sectors. "We're viewed as competent professionals; we aren't viewed as, you know, little old ladies in tennis shoes telling people what color to paint their mailboxes," she said. "We can actually effect positive change, both in historic districts and through the lessons we've learned from our work in historic districts that is applicable elsewhere."

Under Wright, the inventory of historic properties protected by the county's historic preservation ordinance has grown by the addition of historic districts in Beallsville, Takoma Park, Chevy Chase, Kensington, and Garrett Park, as well as numerous individual historic sites. The county's *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* includes a wide array of individually designated properties distributed throughout the county and representing all of the periods during which the area now comprising Montgomery County has been occupied, from Native American archaeological sites to post-World War II suburbs. These sites were put into the book *Places from the Past* by staff member Clare Kelly (Cavicchi), under Wright's leadership. Wright was also instrumental in developing and obtaining state recognition and certification of the county's Heritage Area, which promotes heritage tourism across the county.

Historic preservation in the twenty-first century will face a number of challenges, including the designation of late twentieth-century properties and increasing pressure from historic property owners to use more synthetic modern materials such as vinyl siding. Meeting both, she believes, will be a matter of education and negotiation. "The biggest [challenge] is just keeping preservation in the forefront of people's minds," said Wright. "If I've learned anything, it's that the job of education, the job of promoting preservation is never done."

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# Historic Preservation News and Notes



*Beall-Dawson House.*

## **Featured Public Historic Site BEALL-DAWSON HOUSE**

103 West Montgomery Avenue, Rockville

You can learn about the county's beginnings at the historic Beall-Dawson House, an elegant federal style brick house in Rockville that features period rooms and changing exhibits. The museum tour highlights the culture and daily life of both the upper class Beall family as well as the enslaved African Americans who labored in the house and on the adjacent property. The Beall-Dawson House is open for public tours Tuesday through Sunday from noon to 4:00 p.m. For group tour reservations call 301-340-2825. Admission: \$3 for adults; \$2 for seniors and children. Closed major holidays.

## **Falkland Apartments Designation Approved by Planning Board**

The Montgomery County Planning Board has determined that the Falkland Apartments, a portion of which had been proposed to be replaced with high-rise apartment buildings and stores, should be considered eligible for historic designation. The complex at East-West Highway and 16th Street was built between 1936 and 1938 in the wake of federal New Deal programs that brought an influx of new residents to the Washington, D.C., region. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt cut the ribbon at the Falkland's dedication in 1937.

Board members agreed on December 6 that the complex merited eligibility for historic designation, saying that the Falkland Apartments

represent a key part of history and should be preserved even as the county approves more dense projects in downtown Silver Spring. "This is a very good example of suburban apartment design and architecture," said Planning Board Chairman Royce Hanson. "The idea of preserving historic and architecturally important communities even in dense urban areas may be as important, if not more important, than preserving them somewhere else. This is a rare opportunity to preserve something of real value."

This winter, the Historic Preservation Commission will consider an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation regarding the Falkland Apartments, which will then go on to the Planning Board and County Council for final action.

## **HPC on TV**

A new cable TV program highlights the county preservation program. "Montgomery Plans," an award-winning program on County Cable Montgomery, has recently completed an episode hosted by Clare Lise Kelly, Historic Preservation Planner. The segment informs residents and property owners about the preservation program, including how a structure becomes a historic site and what it means if you own a historic property. There are many county historic sites shown in the program — maybe you will see your historic property featured! You may view the show at [www.MontgomeryPlanningBoard.org](http://www.MontgomeryPlanningBoard.org).

## **History Volunteer Conference**

Calling all Montgomery County history or archeology volunteers, or anyone who is interested in being a history volunteer. The Montgomery County Historical Society is hosting the 2nd Annual History Volunteer Conference on Saturday, January 26. From 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. you can learn about the history and pre-history of Montgomery County, grant writing, creating a persona, and much more. The cost is only \$25 for volunteers, or \$30 for not-yet volunteers, and that includes breakfast and lunch! The conference will be held at Montgomery College, Germantown. The application can be downloaded from [www.montgomeryhistory.org](http://www.montgomeryhistory.org). For more information call (301)-340-2825 or email [kylottes@montgomeryhistory.org](mailto:kylottes@montgomeryhistory.org).

## the Preservationist

The Preservationist is the official publication of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission, 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Phone: 301-563-3400. Statements herein do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Commission. Created by the Historic Resources Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 24A, Montgomery County Code) the Commission is responsible for identification, designation, and regulation for purposes of protection, preservation, continued use, and enhancement of sites and structures of historical, archeological, architectural, or cultural value. Commission members are appointed by the Montgomery County Executive and confirmed by the Montgomery County Council.

### Commission

Jef Fuller, AIA, Chair    David S. Rotenstein, Vice Chair  
Nuray Anahtar, AIA    Lee Burstyn    Caroline Alderson  
Timothy J. Duffy    Thomas C. Jester    Warren Fleming    Leslie K. Miles  
Historic Preservation Supervisor Scott Whipple

Requests to be on the mailing list and content information should be directed to the Commission.

# 2008 Preservation Grants Awarded

The Historic Preservation Commission has awarded year 2008 grants for a wide variety of programs, including a play, archiving and research projects, brochures, a video and a conservation plan for a historic building. Congratulations to the following organizations:

- **Adventure Theatre** to create a play for families about the desegregation of Glen Echo Park. The play will be performed both at the theatre in Glen Echo Park and in traveling shows.
- **Boyd-Clarksburg Historical Society** to design and print 5,000 copies of a brochure about the organization and the Boyd Negro School historic site.
- **C & O Canal Association** to create a video: *Saving Our History: Restoring the Monocacy Aqueduct*.
- **Cabin John Citizens Association** to research, design and print a book on the history of Cabin John.
- **Chevy Chase Historical Society** for phase III of their on-going Oral History Project.
- **City of Rockville** to create a brochure on the history of the Rockville Cemetery and print 5,000 copies for the public.
- **Damascus Heritage Society** to catalogue, register and archive their collection of photographs, documents and objects.
- **Heritage Tourism Alliance of Montgomery County** for an ad, brochures and signs for the annual Montgomery County Heritage Weekend.
- **Heritage Tourism Alliance of Montgomery County** to redesign and print 25,000 copies of the *Heritage Montgomery* brochure.
- **Historic Medley District** for research, design and printing of instructional appendixes to

the children's book *Paul's Montgomery*.

- **Kensington Historical Society** to update and expand the *Walking Tour of Kensington* brochure.
- **Montgomery County Historical Society** to design and print Waters House History Center brochures.
- **Montgomery Preservation, Inc.** for the 22nd annual Preservation Awards Reception.
- **Montgomery Preservation, Inc.** to organize from two to four instructional meetings for the public on historic preservation topics.
- **National Capital Trolley Museum** to develop a conservation plan for the Capital Traction Company Switch Tower which is in need of major repairs.
- **Peerless Rockville** for Rockville's Recent Past research, phase VI.
- **Peerless Rockville** for the Montgomery County Cemetery Inventory, phase IV.
- **Town of Brookeville** to create interpretive signage for a nature/history trail in Powers Woods, a park behind the 1860s Brookeville Schoolhouse.
- **Town of Garrett Park** to design and print 1,000 copies of a Walking Tour map/brochure on the town's history and architecture.
- **Town of Washington Grove** for a bronze plaque to be placed at the Railroad Street and Grove Road entrance to the town, describing the town's history.



Waters House History Center

## Former HPC Chair O'Malley Receives Harrison Award

On November 16th Preservation Maryland, the statewide nonprofit historic preservation advocacy organization, presented the George

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In June 2007, Montgomery Preservation, Inc. awarded Wright the 2007 Montgomery Prize for excellence in historic preservation.

Following the recent hiring of new Planning Director Rollin Stanley, Wright — who had

T. Harrison Preservation Award to former Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission Chair Julia O'Malley for her outstanding volunteer contributions to historic preservation in Maryland.

served as Acting Planning Director for several months — is to resume her role as Chief of Countywide Planning.

The complete oral history may be downloaded from the Historic Preservation Section Web site at [www.mc-mncppc.org/historic](http://www.mc-mncppc.org/historic).

### Historic Preservation Tax Credit Applications Due by April 1

Applying for the County historic preservation tax credit is easy. A complete application requires:

- A brief description of the work.
- Photocopies of receipts and/or cancelled checks or other proof of payment.
- Photographs of the structure before (requested) and after the work (required).
- A signed two-page application.

A tax credit application form for work done and paid for in 2007 is included in this issue of *The Preservationist*. Completed forms must be postmarked by April 1, 2008. Additional forms can be obtained, or questions about any aspect of the program answered, by calling the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission at 301-563-3400, or by visiting our website at: [http://www.mc-mncppc.org/historic/instructions/info\\_tax.shtm](http://www.mc-mncppc.org/historic/instructions/info_tax.shtm).

For information on the state rehabilitation tax credit program, go to: [www.marylandhistoricaltrust.net/taxcr.html](http://www.marylandhistoricaltrust.net/taxcr.html), or call the Office of Preservation Services at 410-514-7628.

# Calendar

**Through February 24** Exhibit: *Winter Pastimes*. Explores the joys, and stresses, of the winter season over the past 200 years. Beall-Dawson House, 111 West Montgomery Ave., Rockville. 301-762-1492. [www.montgomeryhistory.org](http://www.montgomeryhistory.org)

**Through March 29** Exhibit: *Germantown*. Focuses on the history of this crossroads town and how it has adapted over the past 160 years to different modes of transportation. Waters House, 12535 Milestone Manor Lane, Germantown. Wednesdays and Saturdays, 10 AM-4 PM and by appointment. Call 301-515-2887. [www.montgomeryhistory.org](http://www.montgomeryhistory.org)

## **January**

**9 & 23** HPC Meeting, 7:30 PM, MRO Auditorium, 8787 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring. Call 301-563-3400. [www.mc-mncppc.org](http://www.mc-mncppc.org)

**26** 2nd Annual Montgomery County History Volunteers Conference. 8:30 AM-3:45 PM, Montgomery College, Germantown. Call 301-340-2825 or [www.montgomeryhistory.org](http://www.montgomeryhistory.org).

## **February**

**13 & 27** HPC Meeting, 7:30 PM, MRO Auditorium, 8787 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring. Call 301-563-3400. [www.mc-mncppc.org](http://www.mc-mncppc.org)

## **March**

**14** HPC Meeting, 7:30 PM, MRO Auditorium, 8787 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring. Call 301-563-3400. [www.mc-mncppc.org](http://www.mc-mncppc.org)

**15** National History Day competition for local Junior High and High School students. 8:30 AM-4:00 PM at the Julius West Middle School in Rockville. To volunteer to judge, please call Emily Correll at 301-340-2825 or email her at [ecorrell@montgomeryhistory.org](mailto:ecorrell@montgomeryhistory.org).

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