

ARLINGTON HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The Arlington Historical Commission (AHC) was established in 1970 to preserve and protect significant buildings within the Town that constitute or reflect distinctive features of the architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the Town. This work is described in the Town of Arlington Bylaws, Title VI, Article 6. To accomplish these goals, the Commission maintains an Inventory of Historically and/or Architecturally Significant Properties and administers the demolition delay bylaw through formal public hearings and informal meetings with owners of inventoried properties. The Commission is an advocate for historic preservation in Arlington. The AHC meets the first Tuesday of each month at the Whittemore-Robbins House and all meetings are open to the public.

This year the Commission launched a web site to communicate its mission and provide information about the work of the commission: www.arlingtonhistoricalcommission.org.

Hearings

The Commission conducted hearings on twelve inventoried properties in 2004 and voted to allow the demolition of 19 Park Ave. and the Symmes Hospital buildings. Oversight on the properties from the 2004 hearings plus work continued from 2003 included: 26 Academy St., 29 Academy St., 122 Appleton St., 38 Brantwood Rd., 58 Brantwood Rd., 3-5 Brattle St.; 20 Colonial Dr., 45 Fairview Ave., 55 Hillside Ave.; 25 Hayes St., 1 Kensington Rd., 449 Massachusetts Ave., 821 Massachusetts Ave., 1167 Massachusetts Ave., 23 Maple St., 58-60 Mystic St., 91, 95 North Union St., 45 Spring St., 24 Stoney Brook Rd., 57 Summer St., Symmes Hospital and the Robbins Memorial Library.

We continue to monitor the property of the inventoried structure that was illegally demolished at 193-195 Forest St.

Symmes Hospital

At its June meeting, the Commission voted to permit demolition of the hospital and nurses' home buildings on the former Symmes Hospital campus. The original hospital building (1909, with additions in 1927, 1949, 1965 and 1984) and nurses' home (1918, with addition c.1935) were designed by leading hospital architects Kendall, Taylor and Co. The 18-acre campus is to be redeveloped as the site of a condominium complex, with a nearby medical office facility, a significant percentage of wooded open space, and a one-acre public park.

Following presentation of impediments to the potential adaptive re-use of the structures, the Commission did not find that they should be designated as "preferably preferred." Moreover, the size and nature of the structures did not make them

reasonable candidates for relocation to another site. The Commission will be involved in promoting ongoing awareness of the history of the Symmes site, particularly in those aspects that will be interpreted in the proposed park. As of the writing of this report, some reconfiguration of plans ultimately may enable the restoration of the former nurses' home, in which case the developers will be working on a voluntary basis with the Commission to retain the historic character of its architecture.

Inventory Expansion

In 2004, the Commission surveyed St. James church and school. Both were added to the Inventory. The Commission foresees additional inventories of significant properties in 2005. In addition, the Commission has continued to work with homeowners on Academy and Maple Streets to include their properties in the Pleasant St. Historic District.

Preservation Award.

The Commission's 2003 Historic Preservation Award was presented to Wendy Stewart and Vernon Brown of 24 Gray Street. Their home, the 1903 Hayes-Saul House, was designed by pioneering female architect Josephine Wright Chapman. The extensive construction project entailed a blend of exceptional restoration of period details, replacement of modern windows with period-appropriate designs, and a new open porch and rear entry that were designed to be sensitive to the original style and scale of the residence.

Other Activities

Throughout the year, Commissioners participate in activities that educate and inform citizens about historic preservation. The AHC participated in Town Day with a booth and in Town Government Day in May. The Commission continues to work with other Town agencies on the maintenance and restoration of the Whittemore-Robbins House and its outbuildings, the Winfield Robbins Memorial Gardens, the Town Hall and its grounds, 23 Maple Street, and the Jarvis House at 50 Pleasant Street.

Commissioners represented the Historical Commission on various Town boards: including the Historic Districts Commission, Zoning Bylaw Review Committee, and the Arlington Preservation Fund.

In August, the Commission accepted Mr. Botterio's resignation as chairman with great regret. Commissioners wish to thank Mr. Botterio for his dedication and commitment to the work of the Arlington Historical Commission; he has done an outstanding job as chair. The Commission unanimously asked him to remain as an Associate Commissioner.