

Hermitage Road Historic District Association

HERMITAGE HERALD

September, 2018

Hermitage Road Historic District Association's Fall Meeting Pool Party. 4012 Hermitage Road. Sunday, Sept. 9, 5 pm

The fall meeting of the Hermitage Road Historic District Association will be held at the home of Sam and Bob Balster, 4012 Hermitage Road in the backyard on Sunday, Sept. 9, 5 pm. .

Bring a dish and beverage to share. This will be a pool-side party and for those who are inclined, swimming is encouraged, so bring your suits and towels also. Please come and enjoy the al fresco dining and a splash in the pool.

No glass bottles, please. In case of rain, we will move inside.

At the top of the agenda for this meeting will be some of the details for the Symphony Designer House at Holly Lawn, 4015 Hermitage. Having survived extensive destruction from a straight line wind storm on June 15, 2016, a major renovation ensued that took over two years to complete. This beautiful house is described in the National Register as; c. 1897 Single Dwelling This is a two-and-a-half-story, four-bay, Queen Anne and Colonial Revival high-style building clad in weatherboard. It has a complex plan and complex shingle roof with five chimneys. The entrance is marked by an off-center wood paneled entry door with one sidelight and a transom. The windows are 1/1 double-hung on the main and upper levels, with a Palladian window in the projecting gable. Stylistic elements include a modillioned cornice, a widow's walk, oval windows, a bay window on one side, a two-



4012 Hermitage Road, home of Bob and Sam Balster

story porch on the other, and a full-width, single-story entry porch with balustrade and a pedimented shed roof supported by squared, tapered columns. It sits on a deep rectangular lot with a deep setback and horseshoe driveway.

It is one of four houses in the district designed by architect D. Wiley Anderson. Opening this house for tour brings area-wide attention to the Hermitage Road Historic District again this year.

As in past occasions, when the Hermitage Historic District is host to many visitors, we try to look our best by cleaning up the median beds. We can only do this with the help of our volunteers. A call to those willing to help will go out and times set for a few hours of time for beautification.

Happy Fall y'all!



Weeds

Weeding isn't a one-time event.

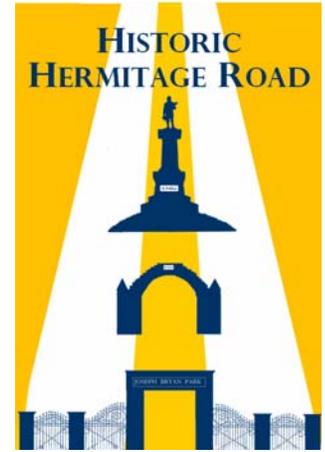
Instead, controlling median weeds takes time and regular maintenance. If you have adopted a bed in the median, please work to ward off weeds and prevent them from taking over. Attention to them at least once per month will accomplish a great deal. Thank you all for the time, expense and effort that you have made toward beautifying the historic district. It has been extraordinary.

In Spring 2015 the Hermitage "Bed Buddies" were formed with volunteers committing to adopt a median bed and to weed their bed once a month during the summer. Celia Sease and Lisa Wood pledged to adopt both beds at Bellevue Avenue. Joy Mingis, Brooke Hughes and Judy Harr took the two beds at Princeton. William Chettle and Bart Lacks adopted the Claremont bed. Sam Balster and Leslie Stack adopted the northern bed at Nottaway, and Bernard Riley of St. Alban's, the southern bed at Nottaway. The beds at Laburnum and Westbrook were taken by Hilda Braswell and Jody Godsey. Activity has fallen off as an individual's circumstances and health change. Now it's time to reassign some beds and get ready for anticipated guests. It will be one of the subjects of discussion at our meeting.

The other obligation we have is to the state. For ceding us the land for the pocket park, we are to pick up trash along the exit ramp 81 on a quarterly basis. This hasn't been done for several years.

Please know that every job you do shows and is appreciated by many, many people.

If you have a Hermitage Road Historic District flag, please display it during the tour duration Sept. 17 to Oct. 14.



We are losing our aging urban forest in the historic district. Besides the tree that took out the front of the house at Holly Lawn (4015), a huge oak completely uprooted in front of Rosedale (4016) as well as one in front of 4104 several years ago and 4102 in the last hurricane; and the house (4012) that is our host for the September meeting also had numerous huge trees downed by storms, one that landed in the second floor bedroom. Luckily in these instances there were no injuries but it reminds us that one cannot rely on the soundness of an old tree.

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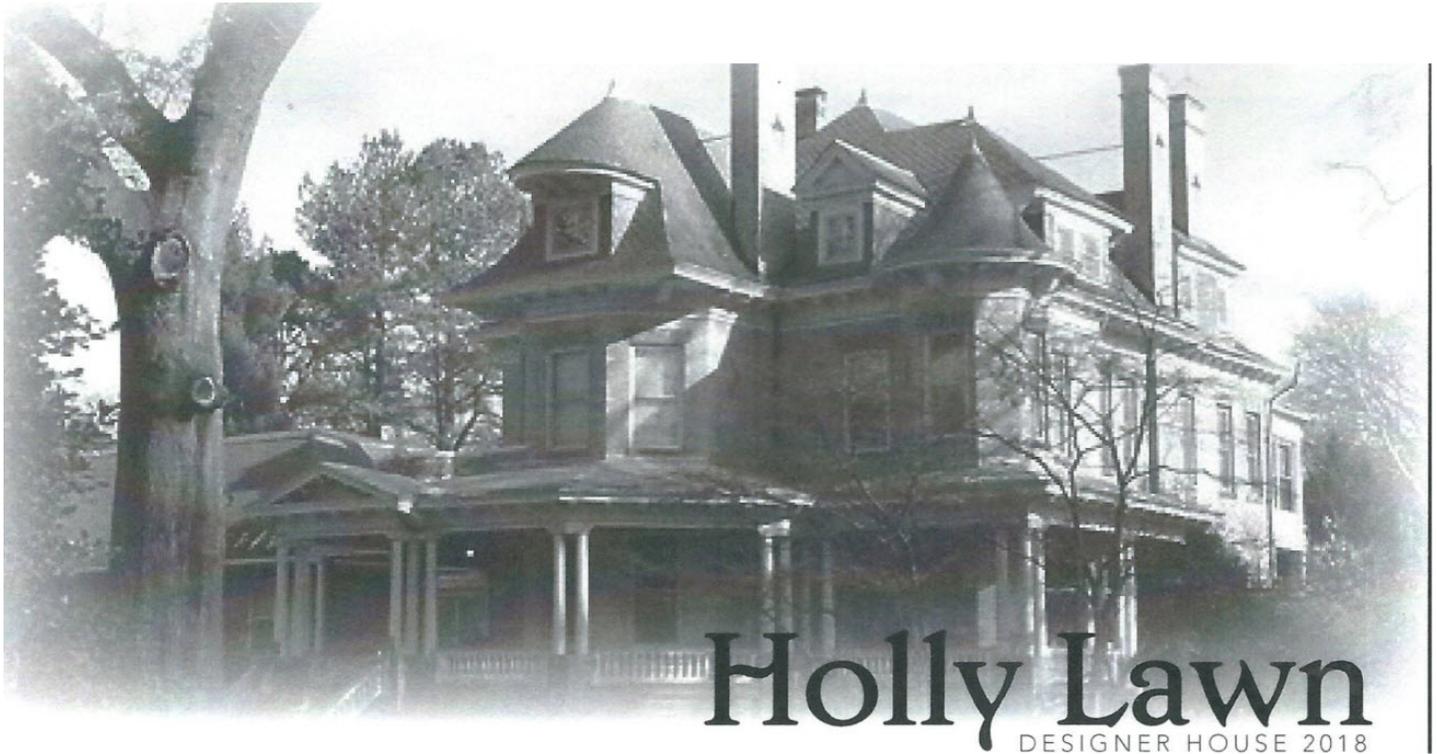
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RICHMOND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA LEAGUE
Presents

Holly Lawn Designer House 2018
4015 Hermitage Road, Richmond

Inspiring home design spaces' created by Virginia's leading designers

House Tours | September 17 - October 14 M-F 10am-3pm • Sat.
10am-5pm • Sun 1-5pm

Gourmet Cafe | Fabulous Boutique

SPECIAL EVENTS

- THIRSTY THURSDAYS -
September 20, 27, October 4, 11
5:30-7:30pm
Home Tour • Garden Party Food • Music • Wine • Beer
- PREVIEW GALA , September 14, 6-10pm
Preview Home Tour
Music by Richmond Symphony Musicians
Cocktail Buffet
- Tickets & Information: WWW.RSOL.ORG

Details of events and opportunities that residents of Hermitage Road can participate in will be available at the meeting Sept. 9.

John Pope's Influence and Rosedale, 4016 Hermitage

D. Wiley Anderson designed a number of the substantial residences along Hermitage Road. "Rosedale" at 4016 Hermitage Road is an excellent example of Anderson's eclectic designs. Combining Queen Anne and Colonial Revival elements, Anderson juxtaposed a complex Queen Anne building form and roof form against a four-bay façade that gives the impression of Colonial Revival symmetry, and embellished it with Colonial Revival detailing. Anderson designed the circa 1897 home for John Pope, a prominent Richmond businessman and a real estate partner of Lewis Ginter. Sadly,



Rosedale is John Pope's home in which he never had the chance to live. It is also the name of the neighborhood of houses that exist in the area west of Hermitage to Interstate 95.

Pope passed away before he could occupy "Rosedale." After years of neglect, General and Mrs. Robert Donahue rescued the property in 1991 and dedicated their time and resources into restoring "Rosedale" to the grand estate property that Pope envisioned. Attention to detail in the original construction and the subsequent quality restoration are the hallmarks of "Rosedale".

A Neighborhood History Involving Pope and Ginter

In the summer of 1888, the legendary Richmond entrepreneur and "cigarette king," Lewis Ginter, took a first-class ocean voyage to Australia. While exhibiting goods of the Allen & Ginter tobacco firm at the World's Fair in Melbourne, he witnessed some of the most beautiful and stately streetcar suburbs in the world. They profoundly inspired him.

Meanwhile, the Westbrook plantation home in Richmond went up for auction, which was on the site of today's Westminster Canterbury. Ginter's loyal business partner and close companion of 15 years, John Pope, was the highest bidder on what would become the pair's country retreat.

These wealthy men, always looking for ways to improve Richmond, were working a much bigger plan – albeit from opposite sides of the globe. And the stars were in perfect alignment for their plan. For one thing, post-Civil War Richmond was finally on a steady path to growth. Secondly, Richmond had just become the first American city with a successful electric streetcar system. Thirdly, Richmond's inner city was overcrowded and unsanitary. And, fourthly, amidst a real estate boom, there was a new national movement to create the "ideal suburb." So, Ginter and Pope – together with Joseph Bryan of Laburnum and several of their cohorts – decided to develop streetcar suburbs near Westbrook. And they wanted those suburbs to be the best in every way.

Right after Ginter returned from Australia, he and Pope began buying up land on both sides of Brook Turnpike, today's Brook Road. In December of 1888, John Pope purchased a 118-acre market farm along the west side of Brook Turnpike, called "Hickory Hill," and the next month he purchased an adjoining 42-acre parcel. Together, these two tracts comprised the land bordered by today's Westbrook Avenue, Hermitage Road, Bellevue Avenue and

Brook Road – the land that was destined to become Bellevue.

In the late-19th century, large-scale suburban development was a protracted endeavor, especially for high-minded men like Ginter and Pope. Starting with a blank slate, they wanted to make their creation stylish, beautiful and brimming with amenities.

When Pope purchased the Bellevue acreage, it was farmland – established for at least a century. Tobacco was probably grown first, and transported by horse-drawn cart to Richmond. But by the early 1850s, the main crop was wheat. It was no doubt taken to Richmond's towering, world-renowned mills, with the flour transported by ship to South America, Europe and the Caribbean. Slaves worked the crops and did the lion's share of the manual labor in getting it to market.

Then, in January of 1861 – on the eve of the Civil War – an unlikely fate befell the owner of "Hickory Hill." John O. Taylor got into a disagreement with a confused elderly man over rights to a slave girl named Violet, and Taylor ended up getting shot. He died at his farmhouse about two weeks later. His wife and young daughter kept the farm, and tried to move forward.

During the war, columns of Confederate troops marched by "Hickory Hill" northward from Richmond along Brook Road, then known as the Brook Plank Road. There were also mounted cavalry by the thousands, led by Major General J.E.B. Stuart. All these men were being deployed far and wide to help protect the Confederate Capitol from siege by Union troops. On occasion, those troops managed to venture past the city's outer defenses and into the area – most notably during the Dahlgren-Kilpatrick Raid in March of 1864. According to the Richmond Dispatch, Union troops set up eight cannon on Mrs. Taylor's farm and exchanged fire with Confederates at the intermediate defenses (near today's Confederate Avenue). The raid didn't come off as planned, and within four hours the Union troops retreated. As they went, they committed "wanton outrages" in the area – stealing horses, carriages and slaves, as well as shelling Labor-

num.

Finally, in April of 1865, the long and bloody war was over. And so was slavery.

By the early 1880s, "Hickory Hill" had been sold several times and boasted the "largest orchard of selected and choice fruits probably in the state." It also had large crops of strawberries, raspberries and corn. When Pope came into the picture in 1888, he purchased the farm – crops and all.

Together with Ginter, he decided to name his development "Bellevue," which in French means "beautiful view." By design, the name had an air of sophistication. Ginter may have been inspired by Australia's Bellevue Hill, an affluent suburb with lavish villas and commanding views of Sydney Harbor.

Pope and the other investors formally chartered their land development company in 1891, calling it the Sherwood Land Company. Ginter was president, and Pope was secretary/treasurer.

In the early 1890s, Ginter macadamized Brook Road and lined it with hundreds of trees. The road was hailed far and wide as one the smoothest and most beautiful anywhere. Ginter apparently built the area's first grocery, Brook Store, at Bellevue and Brook Roads.

The work on Bellevue itself began around 1894, when Pope and Ginter had the Bellevue Arch constructed as an imposing and welcoming entrance to the enclave. It was true to the ideology of the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, which, with its model city, sparked the City Beautiful Movement. The granite used in the Arch likely originated from Ginter's nearby quarry, the source for his road material. From there, the stone was transported by narrow-gauge rail using "The Barbara," a steam locomotive Ginter had ordered from Richmond Locomotive and Machine Works. He was a director and large stockholder in the company.

As early as February of 1896, Ginter had streetcars running on Chamberlayne Avenue and Brook Turnpike. Shortly thereafter, they ran along Hermitage Road as well.

Having completed the Bellevue Arch, as well as a new road winding its way through the property, John Pope seemed off to an impressive start. But fate intervened. In 1896, the hard-toiling Pope died of a throat infection at just 39 years of age. His death left Ginter “bowed down in grief” and in rapidly declining health from diabetes. He was never the same man, and died the following year.

Now, it was up to others to carry out Ginter and Pope’s mission.

As for Bellevue, it had passed to John Pope’s brother, George. He lived in Brooklyn, New York. He mapped out home lots and streets in the portion west of today’s Crestwood Road – which was to be called Bellevue Park – but he too died before it got off the ground. The land then passed to another sibling, Margaret Pope. She soon sold it out of necessity.

Ginter Park, located east of Brook Road, started taking off in 1908 through the work of Ginter’s heirs and others. But Bellevue didn’t blossom as a middle class suburb until the 1920s. Its success was assured by the burgeoning middle class and the arrival of the convenient automobile. Bellevue’s developers were the Davis brothers, one of whom had staked out his own small farm on the property, called “Willowbrook,” located on Hermitage Road south of Westbrook Avenue. Developed concurrently with Bellevue was Brookdale, which is popularly considered part of the Bellevue district. In the 1940s, the north side’s streetcars got scrapped. Rumor has it that the metal was converted into bombs for use during World War II.

By the late ‘40s, most of the homes in Bellevue had been built, evincing a rich mix of architectural styles. They include Bungalow, American Foursquare, Shingle Style, Colonial Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival. The largest and most impressive homes line Pope Avenue, which was named in honor of **John Pope – extraordinary businessman, civic-minded citizen, philanthropist, and Father of Bellevue.**



John Pope’s neglected gravesite at Hollywood Cemetery

John Pope’s Death Notice

THE BOSTON DAILY ADVERTISER

Thursday, April 9, 1896

JOHN POPE

Richmond, Va., April 8--Mr. John Pope, vice-president of the American Tobacco Co., died at the residence of Major Lewis Ginter in this city tonight. Mr. Pope was about 40 years old.

His malady was laryngitis from which he had been suffering for some time. An operation was performed on Saturday, which failed to give he relief hoped for.

Mr. Pope was not quite 40, and with the exception of Lewis Ginter was the wealthiest man in Virginia.

He came here from New York with Mr. Ginter in 1873. The latter joined J.F. Allen & Co., who were manufacturing cigarettes on a small scale. When Mr. Allen sold out his interest to Mr. Ginter, Mr. Pope became a partner in the business.

In 1888, when the concern was incorporated, he was made vice-president. When, in 1890 the business was absorbed by the American Tobacco Co., Mr. Pope was retained as vice-president. Mr. Pope had one brother, who is here and three sisters in Brooklyn.

Besides his interest in the American Tobacco Co., Mr. Pope was connected with some of the most important enterprises in the state.

Want to help clean up Pope’s grave site? Join Hilda Braswell and Joan Peaslee in September (TBD) when the weather is cooler.

The Scottish Rite Temple buildings are for sale



The Scottish Rite Temple is located at 4204 Hermitage Road on the outskirts of Richmond. It was completed in 1969 when the Lodge moved here from the Masonic Temple at Broad and Adams Street in downtown. It is considered an International-style, non-contributing structure (termed mid-20th century mundane by some critics) within the Hermitage Road local, state and national historic districts, which focus on the Victorian-era residential architecture nearby. The asking price for the Scottish Rite Temple buildings on Hermitage Road in Richmond is \$6.8 million.

The buildings sit on 5.35 acres at 4204 Hermitage Road and include a 46,128-square-foot structure dating to 1969 and a 4,024-square-foot structure dating to 1991.

"We need to downsize. It's gotten too big for us. Our membership has decreased over the last 50 years. The maintenance and upkeep of the building is more than we can handle right now," said Bob Carpenter, general secretary of the Richmond Scottish Rite Masons. Fixing the air conditioning alone would cost well over \$1,000,000.

The Scottish Rite had about 4,000 members when the building opened in 1969 compared to about 1,300 members now.

The property is listed with Sam Dunn of Oak-Stone Properties.

The larger building is assessed at \$4.712 million and the smaller one at \$482,000, city property records show. The two buildings are separated by a breezeway.

The larger building has a 650-seat auditorium, commercial kitchen, dining hall and meeting rooms. The smaller one has offices and houses the Scottish Rite Childhood Language Center, which provides treatment for children with speech and hearing difficulties. "The patients come to us. We have the clinicians on staff," Carpenter said

There has been a lot of interest in the building,

one being the New Community School across the street from the building. The main drawback for them would be the safe crossing of the street for the children. Another interested party is a church.

Carpenter acknowledged the property is in the Hermitage Road Historic District and that the district's association would have a say in any changes a new owner would want to make to the property.

If the buildings sell, the Scottish Rite Temple would relocate, Carpenter said. "We are looking at probably building a new building. Where remains to be seen," he said.

There is the chance that the language center could remain and lease the space.

The adjacent Acca Shriners property at 1712 Bellevue Ave. is separately owned and not for sale.

"We just started a \$250,000 renovation of our building, so it's certainly not for sale," said Richard D. Redman of the Acca Shriners.

"We are totally redoing the inside of it. We use it for quite a bit of rentals. We have a huge ballroom that we rent for weddings and stuff like that," Redman said. "We are redoing the lobby, painting and redoing the ballroom."

Most of this information is taken from Tammie Smith's article in the Richmond Times Dispatch. 8/6/18 and direct conversation with Bob Carpenter.



Broad and Adams building



4204 Hermitage Road