

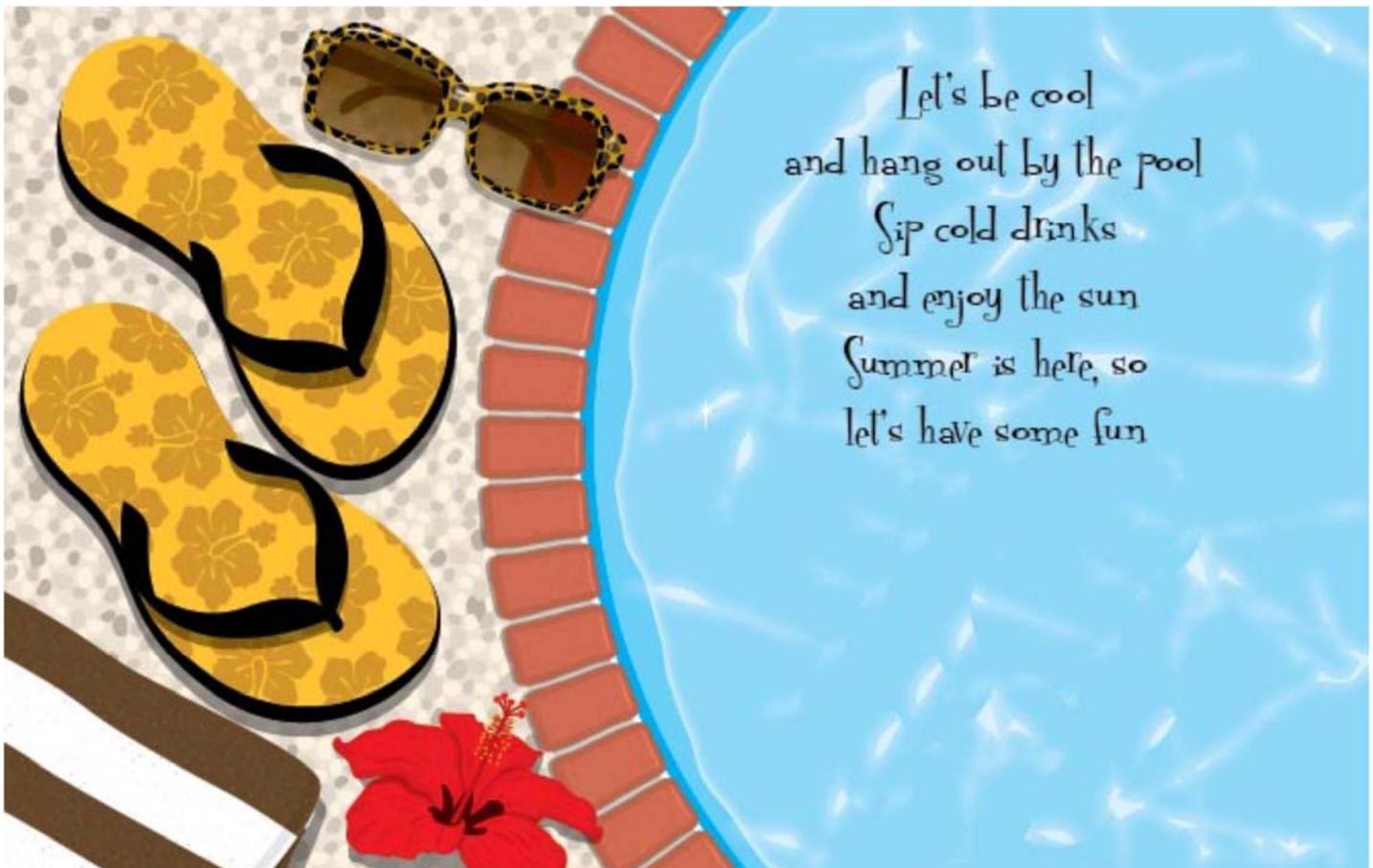
Hermitage Road Historic District Association

Hermitage Herald

June/July 2019



Summer Meeting at 5:30 pm on Sunday July 7
4012 Hermitage Road, The Balster's



The next HRHD Association meeting will be held on Sunday July 7 at 5:30 at the home of Bob and Sam Balster, 4012 Hermitage Road. The gathering will be held outside by the swimming pool which is open for anyone who wants to use it. Children are welcome too. Please bring an appetizer, dessert or side dish to share, and your favorite beverage. If you remember, [please RSVP to tsych@comcast.net](mailto:tsych@comcast.net).

Dear Neighbors:

I want to bring the membership up to date on HRHD Association activities and events in the neighborhood. I hope doing so will make our business meetings more efficient and shorter.



OLD BUSINESS

Trees in the 3800 Block: Several healthy trees on the west side of the 3800 block of Hermitage Road have been marked for removal. They are marked with a prominent “X” on the trunk. The Department of Public Utilities wants to remove the eight trees to do sewer repair/replacement. We discussed this at the last meeting of the Association in April and voted to send a letter opposing the removal of the trees to Councilman Chris Hilbert with copies to the Department of Public Works and the Department of Public Utilities. A letter was hand delivered to City Hall on April 18. We had no response from Councilman Hilbert but understand that the city is reevaluating its removal plan.

“Bed Buddies”: We continue to need volunteers to help maintain the garden beds at the intersections along Hermitage Road. Most are in pretty good shape, but continually need attention. Email Hilda Braswell at brashweb@comcast.net to volunteer.

New trees: There is a one-year warrantee on the trees planted last spring. Some of the problems we have reported have been addressed already, but there may still be time to report new problems. If you are aware of any ailing trees, please alert me so we can schedule replacements within the warrantee period.

Bike lanes: I have made attempts to obtain input from Councilman Hilbert’s office on the formal status of the bike lanes on Hermitage Road so we can have the rules perfectly clear. They have also been asked about setting up a system of gaining permission for residents to use the parking lane for cars when they are having special events. No progress on that front.

Treasury: The Treasury balance at the April Business Meeting was \$410.36. This is lower than I would like and necessitates reducing the frequency of mowing at the Pocket Park at Hermitage and Westbrook.

Treasurer: Bart Lacks is retiring from the position he has filled with distinction since 2003. He suggested the association have books audited when the position is filled. We need to elect a New Treasurer at the next meeting. Our deepest thanks to Bart for holding this office for us for so long.

NEW BUSINESS

Sale of 4104 Hermitage Road: Lisa wood reports that the property at 4104 Hermitage Road has been sold to a Washington couple, who will be moving here with their 3-year old child. Closing is scheduled for July 15. We look forward to welcoming these new neighbors.

Election of Officers: The main order of business at the Association Business Meeting in July is the election of officers for the Association. The following persons have agreed to serve if elected:

President: Robert Balster
Vice-president: Michael Kurze
Secretary: Cheryl Magazine
Treasurer: to be determined
Newsletter: Hilda Braswell

I will continue to work with the Board as Past President.

It's been nearly two years since I was "voted" President of the HRHDA at Matt and Brooke's house; I can't believe it. I wonder if the vote was confused with voting for the best dessert rather than for President, whatever, a few things have been accomplished. Twenty-seven new trees, the HRHDA sign repaired, having our voice be heard about bike lanes coming from Brook to Hermitage to name a few.

Several items I had hoped would be resolved during my time but will continue to be considered if Bob Balster becomes our next president and will remain topics until a resolution has been reached.

Thank you for this opportunity and I feel very honored to have gotten to help with any improvements made on our beautiful street, even if the vote was really meant for my banana pudding. All I ask is that as many of you as possible please participate in what

is most important to you that will help improve and beautify this historic road. Join the association so your voices will be heard at the meetings and fresh ideas can be considered.

Next Meeting: The next HRHD Association meeting will be held on Sunday July 7 at 5:30 at the home of Bob and Sam Balster, 4012 Hermitage Road. It is planned to hold the gathering outside by the swimming pool which is open for anyone who wants to use it. Children are welcome too. Please bring an appetizer, dessert or side dish to share, and your favorite beverage. If you remember, please RSVP to tsych@comcast.net.

Respectfully,

Celia Cease



Bart Lacks, Treasurer of the Association since 2003 will Retire.

Bart Lacks is retiring from the position he has filled with distinction since 2003. As the slate of officers in the association changed on a yearly basis, Bart was the steady element in the administration for 17 years. Our deepest thanks to Bart for holding this office for HRHDA for so long.



Celia Cease will Retire as President of HRHDA

Celia Cease has served two terms as President of the HRHDA with distinction. We appreciate her dedication to resolve neighborhood issues during her tenure.

STREETCAR SUBURBS: THE STREETCARS MAY BE GONE. BUT THEIR IMPACT LINGERS

Situated northwest of Richmond's central business district and just south of the Henrico County line, the Hermitage Road Historic District developed between the late 1800s and early 1900s, starting as an enclave of elegant country estates and evolving into a middle- to upper-class neighborhood on the Lakeside Streetcar Line, one of many electric rail lines that served Richmond and its suburbs. Tobacco magnate Lewis Ginter, a major real estate investor in the city's Northside, funded the Lakeside line to develop his holdings, which included the Lakeside Zoo and Wheel Club, the site today of the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden. Early developers touted homes offering electric, telephone, and sewage connections as well as an ample supply of pure water from local artesian wells. Residential architecture accounts for the majority of the district's properties, revealing both high style and more modest dwellings of Late Victorian, Colonial Revival, and American styles. The districts' roads are wide and tree-lined, giving it a spacious, park-like feel. Lot sizes are large and many deeds had set-back covenants. In 1914, Richmond appropriated 12.21 square miles of Northside from Henrico, including the current Hermitage district, the city's largest annexation. Today the district remains residential. Most of the original concrete poles used for the overhead trolley wiring are still located in the median of the street and are still in service after over 100 years.

You have to look in the right places to see remnants of Richmond's streetcar lines. Disused tracks still exist, here and there, and a few streets, such as Semmes and Grove avenues and Hermitage Road, still have concrete utility poles in the median, where the streetcars once ran.

You don't have to look hard to see evidence of how the streetcar lines impacted Richmond, though. Much of the city's residential growth from 1905 to roughly 1925 came as a result of the streetcar lines, directly or indirectly. Just

look at the houses built during those years, and you're seeing the lines' impact.

"Once you look past the 1867 annexation line of the city, there's nothing beyond that that wasn't tied to streetcar lines," said Kim Chen, principal planner with Richmond's Division of Planning and Preservation.

A CITY EMBRACES THE DAILY COMMUTE

Richmond embraced streetcars early; in 1888, it became the first U.S. city to have a successful electric streetcar line. (Before that, horsecar lines carried passengers around the city.) The electric streetcars, which were operated by several independent companies in the early years, allowed the suburbs to expand far beyond a city center that many residents associated with dirty air and unclean living conditions.



Woodland Heights

By 1889, the Southside Land & Improvement Co., which operated a streetcar line along Semmes Avenue in South Richmond, had begun work on Woodland Heights, the city's first streetcar suburb. (Today, the South Richmond neighborhood runs south from the James River to Bainbridge Street and Forest Hill Avenue and west from West 24th Street to Forest Hill Park.)

Shortly afterward, crews built the First Street and Fifth Street viaducts across the ravine formed by Bacon's Quarter Branch, and streetcars began carrying passengers to an area – present-day North Side – that hadn't been previously developed because it had been too difficult to reach from the city. Soon, construction began on four streetcar

suburbs there: Barton Heights, Brookland Park, Chestnut Hill and Highland Park.



Forest Hill Park

New streetcar lines expanded to the edge of the city line and beyond, and eventually, they carried passengers throughout much of Greater Richmond, stretching from Church Hill in the East End to the site of the present-day University of Richmond in the West End, and from Forest Hill Park in South Richmond to Lakeside Park in northern Henrico County.

And with the new lines came new houses. Many of them – especially in the early days of the streetcar lines – were built by land development companies tied directly to the streetcar companies.



Highland Park

“Parent companies often controlled both,” Chen said.

“Three or four people might be a part of the development company, and three or four people might be a part of the streetcar company. There was a lot of common ownership.”

As the streetcar lines matured, though, independent residential construction sprang up along the lines, Chen said.

Owners of large agricultural tracts began to sell off parcels to developers or builders, who subdivided them and built speculative houses on the lots, often for middle-class buyers.

“The development companies building the suburbs introduced the idea that you could buy a house with what was basically a mortgage,” Chen said. “Suddenly, a clerk in a bank could own a house.”

These independently built houses along the streetcar lines are often stylistically distinct from the houses built in the early streetcar suburbs, which were typically large and sited on expansive lots.

“With the speculative houses, you get blocks of uniformity, with one builder constructing homes on, say, 10 lots,” Chen said.

Drive through the city’s Fan District, largely built out during the streetcar years, and you’ll see abundant examples of this uniformity in scale, for example.

One interesting anomaly is the collection of streetcar suburbs that the architectural historian Deborah Rau has called “residential clusters” along either side of Three Chopt Road near the Country Club of Virginia in the city’s West End. There, small developers as well as a group of friends and acquaintances created an organic neighborhood with high-style houses laid out in a non-grid pattern, fed by the Westhampton streetcar line.

Not surprisingly, the architectural styles of the houses built in the streetcar suburbs shifted over time.



Barton Heights

“The late-19th century neighborhoods have great examples of the Queen Anne and other Victorian styles,” Chen said. “In the early 20th century, you start to see more four-squares and bungalows.”



Highland Park

And as popular taste shifted away from Victorian styles, some of the streetcar suburbs began to adopt distinctive looks.

“You see a lot more Tudor and Spanish Colonial revival-style houses in North Side’s Bellevue neighborhood than you do in the East End, for example,” Chen said.

THE END OF THE LINE

As successful as the streetcar lines were, their reign didn’t last especially long. By 1925, the automobile had become

affordable, and its growing popularity helped bring an end to the streetcar era.

“You can see it in North Side suburbs,” Chen said. “The earlier developments from the turn of the century to the 1910s have alleys and no driveways. After that, you see driveways and garages.”

By the early 1940s, the streetcar companies had gone through a series of consolidations, and some individual lines had been shut down. Richmond’s final streetcar ride took place on Nov. 25, 1949. The event was marked by a parade of streetcars down Main Street. Two weeks later, the streetcar that led the parade was burned.

Public buses replaced streetcars, in many cases following the streetcar lines through the city. Over time, most of the streetcars’ utility poles were removed and the tracks paved over. Except for the houses built during the streetcar years, the streetcars might not have existed at all.

Of course, suburban houses would have been built eventually, as the city grew. But those houses might have been less diverse stylistically, if they had been built beginning in the 1920s, rather than the 1890s, Chen said.

“The streetcars and related speculative development made Richmond’s architecture interesting,” Chen said.

- Richmond Times Dispatch, Doug Childers/Homes Correspondent, Mar 9, 2019

EXTERIOR CHANGES IN HISTORIC DISTRICT

For most of those receiving this newsletter, any exterior changes to your home that are visible from a public right of way require a Certificate of Appropriateness submitted to the Commission of Architectural Review or CAR. To obtain more information about this, you can go to Richmondgov.com, click on the Community Development tab that will take you to their page where you will find the category “Historic Properties”. Under this you will find “Application for Certificate of Appropriateness” and can download the form. The review process will be scheduled at one of the CAR’s regular meetings after receiving the application.

HRHDA NEEDS A TREASURER

The position of Treasurer requires a little personal time. He or she is one who writes checks, makes deposits, and provides financial reports to the board.

He must manage the filings of tax forms, collect association dues, pay out bills incurred by the association, and report quarterly financial status of the association at quarterly meetings. It would also require regular attendance at board and association meetings.

Current Treasurer Bart Lacks will work with the new treasurer until the duties are learned.

If you would consider this position with the HRHDA board, please contact tsych@comcast.net.