President’s Message

Let me first take this opportunity to thank you all for your role in a very successful year for HPF. As you will see in these pages, it has been a very active year and plans are in place for an even more engaged 2020. The year got off to a mixed start with the celebration of the successful rehabilitation of a home on Liberty Street followed by the catastrophic loss of the Nash Building. In late summer, we lost a house on St. Andrews Street. Threats remain against the historic fabric of our community. As the year ends, we are working with the City Planning Department to conduct a citizen led effort to quantify the blight that currently is evident in our Historic Districts so that City resources might be applied. Earlier this year, we offered a workshop on what it means to live in an historic district and are currently helping with a grassroots effort to get portions of Walnut Hill designated as a historic district. All of these efforts grow out of our belief that preservation begins with the neighborhood and individual homeowner. Preservation truly does begin at home. But it need not stop there. HPF assists and guides by providing the tools, the information and the encouragement to get the job done.

We are very proud of the educational programs we have been able to provide in 2019. Within the last few months, we were honored to organize and promote several such events, providing not only useful and stimulating information, but also the opportunity for camaraderie and engagement. By interacting with a wide range of our fellow citizens, we were able to broaden our knowledge of the area’s history.

None of the success we have had would be possible without partnering with others. Working closely with the Preservation Task Force, the City, the Cameron Foundation, Preservation Virginia, FOLAR and other groups has multiplied each organization’s individual efforts toward broader progress.

As supporters of HPF, you are at the core of our progress. Thank you for helping to make it possible. As you gather with family and friends over the holidays, spread the word and encourage them to join us in this ongoing effort to make Petersburg a better place.

On a more somber note, HPF lost a great leader this September when Dr. James Ryan passed away. Jim served as president of HPF in the 1990s and was involved with the preservation of the Peter Jones site, among many other issues. Jim was residing in Florida when he passed but was laid to rest in Blandford Cemetery with a beautiful ceremony honoring his many years of both military and civic service. Several HPF members attended. Jim’s contributions to Petersburg live on. We thank him for his service to country and community.

New Membership brochure available

The Historic Petersburg Foundation is always looking for new members. To that end, a new membership brochure was created and is now being circulated whenever and wherever possible. But we could use your help!

With HPF’s renewed effort to make a difference for the City, now is the perfect time to get other people involved. These are exciting times for us!

Here are a few ways you can help:

If you have friends, neighbors, associates, or family members who you think might enjoy helping preserve Petersburg’s historic treasures, please consider giving them a brochure.

If you are member of another organization and have the opportunity to bring a stack of HPF brochures to a meeting or event, please do!

Placing a few brochures in your place of business would certainly be a plus for HPF.

The brochures are available by calling 804-732-2096 or by emailing us at historicpetersburgfoundation@verizon.net.

We truly appreciate your help. Together, we can make HPF membership grow and be the most effective it’s ever been.
Depency Tour and Fall Fest
Gets High Marks

It hardly felt like Fall (more like summer in the tropics) but that didn’t keep people from coming out on September 29 to learn about the dependencies behind the Farmers Bank and four houses on High Street.

And a learning experience it was!

In addition to the intriguing buildings and grounds, tour participants were treated to demonstrations and/or performances at each stop. Area craftsmen, artisans, musicians and re-enactors showed off skills and talents obviously honed over many years. The degree of expertise on display that day was impressive to say the least! As an extra bonus, authentic, hand-made items, fall decor and historic books were for sale at various stops.

The idea for the Dependency Tour and Fall Fest came from HPF’s Bob and Bobbi Kennedy who opened the building behind their home, Dodson’s Tavern, for the tour. Built from native stone as a summer kitchen in the 18th century, the structure had another story added later on. The original kitchen level has been beautifully restored and authentically furnished, and the level above has been delightfully repurposed as a comfortable guest house.

But the Kennedys did more than just open their dependency and lovely grounds. They did the bulk of the work lining up the participants and organizing the event. HPF is extremely grateful for their wonderful idea and hard work culminating in a successful execution of the event.

Special thanks go out to all the participating homeowners, artisans and performers as well as The Friends of Farmers Bank for hosting their kitchen dependency where they offered delicious ginger cookies (along with rosewater cookies made by Petersburg Tourism director Sergei Troubetskoy!) to tour guests.

HPF hopes to continue with having a Fall fundraising event. If you have ideas for next year, let us know!

Wide variety of old and used Books for Sale at HPF

HPF still has a good selection of old books for sale at bargain prices! The large collection includes many historic tomes and vintage children's books. Come on by the HQ to check them out!

Additional renovations completed at HPF Headquarters

Work on the Shirley VanLandingham Headquarters building continued this Fall with the installation of a graveled driveway and parking lot for use of our members and tenants. The second floor work was completed earlier in the year and a portion of that space is being used for regular HPF Board meetings. Part of the first floor is rented out to HistoriCorps. Petersburg Preservation Task Force may join them. This provides revenue and also progress towards making this building a one-stop-shop for preservation information in the City. Thanks go out to Dino Lunsford and his crews for the work both inside and out at our building! Some rental space is still available if you know of an organization or business looking for quality office space on Washington Street!
October 15 was a big day for Petersburg, PPTF, and HPF. The result of PPTF’s efforts, a grant totaling $700,000 for renovations to the Exchange Building was announced at a special ceremony in the rotunda. A Save America’s Treasures award of $350,000 is being matched by $300,000 from The Cameron Foundation and $50,000 from the City. HPF is proud to be designated by the grantees as the Administrator.

Approximately 75 people, including HPF’s board and State Senator Mark Warner, attended the ceremony. In addition to Warner, speakers included PPTF’s President Lisa Jordan, Mayor Sam Parham, Cameron Foundation President Todd Graham, Park Service Director Dan Smith, and HPF President Louis Malon, who pledged to diligently oversee the work on the building. The Exchange Building, which is owned by the City, is a National Historic Landmark and an important part of America’s history.

Lifelong Resident and HPF Supporter Passes

Victor Lavenstein, one of Petersburg’s better-known residents, and an avid supporter of HPF, sadly but quietly passed away on October 8.

In lieu of flowers, the Lavenstein family asked people to instead donate to HPF, a touching gesture for which we are grateful. As of the date of this publication, $1,200 has been received from friends and family. We expect more will come in.

The Lavenstein family goes back to the turn of the 20th century in Petersburg. They owned and operated an upscale, popular department store at 111 Sycamore St. The 4-story building where it was located still has the name “Lavenstein” on the cornice. HPF has done some research and will continue to do so in an effort to ensure that the Lavenstein name is included in Petersburg’s fascinating story.

We all mourn the passing of this kind and interesting man.

To make a donation in memory of Victor Lavenstein, please send your check to HPF at P.O. Box 691 or go to the HPF website.

HPF Board Attends Wallace House Reception

On October 2, members of the HPF Board of Trustees were invited to tour the historic Thomas Wallace House on Market Street during a reception hosted by the owner. The event was to celebrate the rehabilitation of the house and announce its importance to tourism in Petersburg. Still undergoing renovation, it is being offered on Airbnb and is now available as an event venue. HPF holds covenants on the property.

Recent HPF Presentations Draw Crowds

This past summer, history buffs from around the area packed the house at the Train Station in Petersburg to hear Jamestown Archaeologist Dave Givens give an update on discoveries at the site of the 1607 settlement.

In mid-September, homeowners/buyers in the Petersburg area were treated to a workshop about what it means to live in a Historic District. The HPF event was offered in partnership with the City of Petersburg Planning Department, the Department of Historic Resources and Preservation Virginia. Benefits, oppor tunities and challenges of historic designations for homes and the community were discussed. Three members of the HPF Board presented.

Appomattox River Trail to Run Near Peter Jones Trading Post

HPF has been in talks with FOLAR on plans for the portion of the Appomattox River Trail that will run through downtown Petersburg, specifically the part that will pass by the Peter Jones Trading Post site, which HPF owns. Discussions include exactly where the trail will lie and what type of material will be used in the construction. The goal is to minimize disturbance to the overall site and to maintain the historic feel while giving hikers the opportunity to learn about this important place in Petersburg’s past.

Served with a Smile!

In early November, HPF Vice President Bob Kennedy was presented with a check to HPF for $850 from Sedona Taphouse manager Nigel Whitenack. HPF was the August recipient of Sedona’s Steak Out for Charity. Thank you, Sedona and Nigel!!

HF is assisting residents of Walnut Hill with the process of making the area a Historic District. HPF member Marcus Squires is leading the effort. If you live in Walnut Hill or are familiar with the process, your help would be greatly appreciated!
Mark your calendar and watch for upcoming HPF events

15th Ball in the ‘Burg:

Be sure to mark your calendar for February 29 (Leap Day!) when HPF will hold its 2020 Ball in the ‘Burg. It promises to be packed with fun and a trip down memory lane! This is SNL’s 44th season so the characters and skits to emulate will be plentiful! HPF is still working on details including venue but rest assured, wherever it ends up being, it will be a great night. Some things that will definitely be different are the price of tickets (reduced to $75) and a more casual dress code. So stay tuned!!

Christmas is Coming!
And HPF will be Celebrating

For years, HPF put on a Christmas Homes Tour. But that has now been taken over by the Battersea Foundation. And they do a great job with it. But HPF would like to get back to having a holiday event, perhaps re-establishing the tradition with a different take on the house tour. The plan is to start next year with a new event. This year, we will participate in Old Towne’s Old Fashion Christmas and host a very talented group of Williamsburg singers specializing in historic music. Stay tuned!

Group Tours???

For a while now, HPF has been investigating the possibility of re-starting bus tours to various historic sites. These might include Historic Jamestowne, Bacon’s Castle, The John Marshall House, Scotchtown and Prestwould. Of course, there are many more possibilities. In an effort to determine how many people might be interested in the tours, we will be sending out an email with a link to a survey and placing the same link on the HPF website. Please go online, or when you get the email, fill out the survey so that we will know how to proceed with the tours. If you do not use a computer, please call the office and we will mail you a printed copy. Hopefully, we can get on the road in 2020 with some exciting trips!!!