It’s a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

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HSF is as important to Savannah today as it was when this city was unwittingly tearing down its history in the 1950s and 60s. That’s why we ask that you help us...beyond your membership dues. We need your year-end gift to help us do what we do...for the love of Savannah.

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This year’s front and back cover feature the winners of the 2018 HSF Summer Photo Contest. (First Place - Yanitza Ninett; Second Place - Terri Tattan; Third Place - Garret Odenwelder; Fan Favorite - Erin Clarkson)

PAST CHAIRS

1955-1956  H. Hansell Hillyer (Deceased)
1956-1958  Mrs. Anne C. Hunter (Deceased)
1958-1960  Mrs. H. Pemberton (Deceased)
1960-1962  Mrs. Nellie G. Hunter (Deceased)
1962-1964  J.J. Rauer (Deceased)
1963-1965  John Allen (Deceased)
1965-1967  Robert D. Gunn (Deceased)
1967-1969  Walter C. Hartridge II (Deceased)
1969-1971  Robert B. Gunn (Deceased)
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1973-1975  Mrs. Lawrence Lee, Jr.
1975-1977  Mrs. Lawrence B. Lee (Deceased)
1977-1979  Mrs. Elliott A. Cobb (Deceased)
1979-1981  John E. Cay, III
1981-1983  J. Wiley Ellis
1983-1985  J. Wiley Ellis
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2015-2017  Jeff Eley
2013-2015  Kathleen Horne
1997-1999  William (Bill) H. Lovett
2007-2009  W. John Mitchell
2003-2005  Susan Clarnard
2001-2003  Zelda Tenenbaum
1999-2001  Helen Downing
1997-1999  Susan Riley Myers
1993-1997  Lawrence B. Lee (Deceased)
1993-1995  Lee C. Mundell
1991-1993  Graham P. Sadler
1986-1988  Joseph A. Webster, Jr. (Deceased)
1983-1984  Mrs. Henry Garlington (Deceased)
That’s certainly the case with HSF and the advocacy work we do. We are immensely grateful for the support we receive from our friends and colleagues around this community. It’s never easy taking unpopular positions on high profile issues, but it helps to be bolstered by neighborhood associations, local professionals, and informed activists who understand the issues—and their repercussions—and who are not afraid to stand up and speak out. Preservation advocacy is a team sport, and Savannah is fortunate to field an A Team. The government it seems—local, state, or federal—can be your best friend or your worst enemy. Sometimes, it’s both. Recent cases involving the General Services Administration, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and the City of Savannah illustrate their potential impacts on Savannah’s historic landscape.

(GSA) is planning a new federal courthouse annex for Telfair Square. Potentially, this meant the removal of the much reviled “bathroom tile” buildings and their replacement with something much better, right? But then we saw the proposed replacement and its violation of Oglethorpe’s Town Plan and we said, “no thank you.” Around the same time, the National Park Service (NPS) was reassessing the conditions and integrity of Savannah’s National Historic Landmark District, and GSA’s plan ran counter to stated priorities for the District. HSF seized on this opening and—with others—pushed hard against GSA’s plans. With the aid of Congressman Buddy Carter’s office and other key players, we were able to move the needle much closer to the side respecting Oglethorpe’s Town Plan and a design more compatible with the Tomochichi Courthouse. GSA received approval for Part One (height and mass) of the new building, and Part Two (design detail) will occur next spring but, in the meantime, HSF continues to work with GSA to refine the design through the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Wood is good. Many of us have seen that bumper sticker...mostly in the Northeast...but it certainly applies to a forest-rich state like Georgia. So, when double-paned, aluminum clad windows were proposed as replacements for the historic building at the corner of Drayton and Bay Street, it was met with a healthy amount of circumspection. The old American Building is in the process of conversion into a hotel. Reusing a historic building is always good news. And more good news is that it will honor the city’s existing preservation ordinance and use solid wood windows. How did that happen? Compromise. Originally, plans were put forth to amend the city’s ordinance to allow aluminum clad replacement windows—not only for 7 Drayton, but potentially for 30 other historic buildings in the Landmark District. The text amendment would have eliminated a key component of the local preservation ordinance standards which help maintain integrity. But, to the owner’s credit and open discussion among parties, an out-of-the-box solution was forged. The new wood windows will have double panes, but only for the subject building—not a wide swath of other historic buildings. Creative thinking, discussion, and compromise won the day...and the broader text amendment was withdrawn. Savannah’s local ordinance was upheld, and the building in question (set to be rechristened, The Drayton Hotel) will once again be a handsome part of Savannah’s streetscape.
In the mid 1990s HSF came to the rescue of 8 properties on the 500 block of East Jones Street slated for demolition by the city. This past August, HSF’s Revolving Fund acquired the last unrestored property on the block - 510 E. Jones. After standing vacant for ten years, HSF purchased the house from the granddaughter of the woman who had owned it since 1953. Robert Low, an African American bricklayer, first built the adjoined single-story cottage in 1867, before building 510 E. Jones a few years later in 1871. By the time this report has made it into your mailbox, HSF will have held a volunteer cleanup of the property and begun the search for a preservation-minded buyer who will be a good steward for the next 60+ years.

**510 East Jones**

In 2018, HSF helped fund a detailed conditions assessment for arguably the most architecturally significant public building in Savannah - City Hall. Made possible through a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation - which HSF applied for and provided the match for, plus an equal match by the City itself - the conditions assessment was conducted by Lominack, Kohlman, Smith Architects. The nearly 200 page report provided observations about the 115 year old building and corresponding suggestions for restoration and preservation treatments. Elements such as the mosaic tiles in the front foyer, the soaring stained glass dome in the rotunda, the well worn parquet floors in the council chambers, and even the original elevator cages all received thorough attention.

**City Hall**

How did you come to be associated with HSF?

I first discovered HSF by witnessing their work first-hand as an Economics teacher at the Savannah Early College. HSF established a high school curriculum for students in the SCCPSS as well as a Summer ‘Hands on History’ program. I got to work alongside HSF staff in educating the next generation about the value of Historic Preservation and see the impact for myself. Then HSF published ‘Beyond Tourism: Economic Impact Study’ report and I was hooked.

HSF recently held a Summer Photo Contest asking the public ‘What is your favorite historic building or place in Savannah?’ What is your #SAVFAVE and why?

In 2017, our neighborhood [Ardsley Park/Chatham Crescent] faced an unprecedented challenge - the proposed demolition of a 1920 bungalow on 49th Street. Although the home had been listed as contributing on our National Register designation, we lacked any form of local protection to prevent the teardown. A developer for the property reported that there was significant damage to the structure and that it could not be saved. I called HSF and asked them to evaluate the accuracy of the developer’s claim. When HSF came back to the neighborhood and said the home could indeed be repaired and restored - it was a game changer. I rallied the community to save the home, and after a tense battle at the Zoning Board of Appeals, the developer withdrew their request to demolish the historic bungalow.

**An interview with Nick Palumbo**

2018 Lee & Emma Adler Award for Advocacy recipient

**Ardsley Park/Chatham Crescent**

What are some of your highlights or accomplishments serving as the President of the Ardsley Park – Chatham Crescent Neighborhood Association (APCCNA)?

My proudest achievement is having ushered in the first of (what I hope to be) many Conservation Districts in Savannah and Chatham County. It’s an option for communities who want to send the message that they have places that are worth saving and would prefer to grow into and adopt preservation standards as they age. Some call it ‘Preservation Lite,’ but I just call it common sense. This is an incredible opportunity for 36 neighborhoods in Savannah where they can ‘opt-in’ through the support of their neighborhood association or governing council and can work with MPC staff to craft their own standards without requiring a time-consuming petition process. The APCCNA saw the crisis on 49th street as a wakeup call that preservation standards are valuable and needed.
Shaping the Future Through Preservation

Oftentimes we are so engaged in our daily work at HSF that we can miss opportunities to expand our audience and communicate the greater purpose of our mission. We expend a lot of time, money, and energy doing good work, but we so quickly move on to the next crisis, the next issue, or the next endangered building that we forget to celebrate what we've accomplished. HSF's mission is to save buildings, places, and stories that define Savannah's past, present, and future. We touch 45,000 people a year at the Davenport House. But are we really engaging them? Are we moving them to action? The answer is not enough. Using our vaunted Revolving Fund, we have saved more than 370 endangered historic buildings in Savannah. But precious few know or understand how we did it. Are we telling that story in a way that spurs and deepens commitment to the Revolving Fund? The answer is not enough. HSF has made a difference in this community... essentially sparking heritage tourism and the $2.5 billion benefits it brings Savannah each year. But does the civic leadership "get" that the precious and irreplaceable gem that Savannah is can be contorted into oblivion? That the very attraction that draws 14 million annual visitors is fragile—requiring care and feeding? The answer is not enough. HSF is going to fix that. We're going to change how we speak... stop talking in code and jargon. This has got to change if we are to be truly successful.

We need to share results, the story, and even the ripples that come from our work. With greater reflection and explanation, we can realize real growth and advancement. We must engage more people in our movement. HSF is on the cusp of that change through a capital campaign: "Shaping the Future Through Preservation." With dramatic changes to the interpretive program at the Davenport House, the full utilization of the Kennedy Pharmacy as a portal to all things HSF, and an innovative new center to tell the preservation story of Savannah... we will reach out to residents and visitors with both hands. We're doing this all in the name of "progressive preservation." What is progressive preservation? It starts and ends with application and relevance. When the principles of preservation (thrift, creativity, adaptive use, environment, etc.) are applied to growth challenges, HSF espouses the virtue of using preservation not as an end in itself, but a means to a greater end... that of a well-planned and well-managed city. One that puts the emphasis on residents, but welcomes visitors. One that protects authenticity, but leaves room for creative expression. One that says old and new can work together, but the roots of our community's history, architecture, scale and, of course, the Oglethorpe Plan are paramount. If applied, the results ensure both livability and economic vitality. And, in the end, the relevance of preservation as a key planning tool will be embraced and Savannah's future will be strong.
Richard Webb Jr. and his wife Margaret built this free-classic Queen Anne house around 1903. Webb was a shopkeeper for the Ocean Steam Ship Co. of Savannah. Vacant for several years, and falling further and further into disrepair, the Revolving Fund acquired this property in September. As with many of these properties, this house was stuck in limbo due to the death of the owner and unresolved probate issues. HSF stepped forward this past year to help resolve some of these issues by working closely with the family. They sold it to HSF’s Revolving Fund. A property cleanup is planned, and measured drawings have been commissioned. HSF will soon start the search for a preservation-minded buyer with whom they will carry out the rehab.

In 2015, the City of Savannah demolished two blocks of late 19th century worker’s cottages built for African-Americans and known as Meldrim Row. Located in a narrow, unprotected stretch of buildings between two historic districts, it was selected as the site for the new Mid-City police precinct. HSF strenuously objected, but were successful in convincing the city to spare the Keeper’s Cottage. This concession was made after HSF pledged $50K towards its rehabilitation. In 2018, the city commenced the project. HSF used a portion of its dedicated funds to develop a full set of plans, and will oversee their implementation. The balance of the money will go into a maintenance fund, and HSF will hold an easement on the building for 10 years.

For many years, HSF has grown concerned over the state of the Cuyler-Brownville neighborhood. The Savannah Morning News has reported as many as 100 structures have been demolished since the district’s formation in 1998, calling its National Register status into question. In 2018, HSF’s Revolving Fund entered into an agreement with the Savannah Development & Renewal Authority to restore this fire damaged property. HSF will completely oversee the rehab from start to finish. When completed, the single-family house will be sensitively converted to a duplex, with two units of residential market-rate housing. Plagued by crime and disinvestment, Cuyler-Brownville is at a crossroads. HSF hopes to pioneer new investment in the area to give others confidence to follow suit.
2018 Preservation Awards

1. 4th Street, Tybee Island
2. Husk Restaurant
3. 109 East 35th Street
4. Kehoe Ironworks
5. 317 West 36th Street
6. Monica Gann, 2018 Volunteer of the Year
8. 16 Price Street
9. 101 East Oglethorpe Avenue
10. 20 West Taylor Street
11. 1601 Bull Street
12. 1004 East Park Avenue
During this past year, HSF worked closely with the new owners of this Revolving Fund property (c. 1898). The original front porch design was recreated, and the interior, which had been split up into a duplex by 1916, was restored to its original single-family floor plan.

There is a misconception that HSF only works downtown or in the four locally designated historic districts, but this is not the case. HSF strives to protect historic buildings and sites across all of Chatham County. There are a myriad of historic buildings—from 19th century railroad warehouses to mid 20th century homes—that are worthy of protection and which remain vulnerable. Here are two such properties HSF worked to save in 2018.

There is a wealth of historic buildings in Savannah that lie outside the boundaries of local districts, leaving them vulnerable. (Read about two others below.) In August, the Revolving Fund purchased just such a property. HSF felt it was important to save this cottage—it was vacant for many years, had fallen into disrepair, and was unprotected. The front porch makes it look like an Arts & Crafts bungalow, with tapered columns, leading some to assume it was built in the 1920s. However, a surviving decorative bracket hidden under the eaves belies its earlier 19th century origin. It was built sometime prior to 1898.

What do you say to a state agency (one that owned, managed, and neglected a property for 30 years) that petitions to have the historic building demolished? “No,” comes to mind. Well, that’s the situation regarding the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and its “stewardship” of the Mercer Cottage on Burnside Island. Built by the uncle of legendary songwriter Johnny Mercer—who spent time there as a child—the cottage is one of few historic structures left on the island.

On the far west side of town, set back from Ogeechee Road and hidden among a grove of trees, is the Savannah Powder Magazine. Designed by famed architects, Alfred S. Eichberg and Hyman Witcover, it was built in 1898 to hold the city’s gunpowder supply, and is believed to be one of the only surviving municipal powder magazines in the state. Vacant and unused since 1963, the property has suffered from deferred maintenance. In 2018, the City of Savannah, working with HSF, local preservationists, and LKS Architects began to discuss preserving the structure and developing the land around it as a passive park and trail system.

At the time of writing this annual report, HSF has submitted an application for a National Trust planning grant to fund a conditions assessment survey. Should the grant be awarded, HSF has also pledged to provide the match and help oversee the process.

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The Davenport House

A Year of People and Pageantry around Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil

In 2018, the Davenport House Museum (the DH) welcomed nearly 46,000 visitors. This is in keeping with the record-breaking crowds we have come to expect over the past few years - the most since the publication of the international best seller Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil put Savannah on the public's collective bucket list in the mid 1990s. Serving so many requires an army of good people trained in both content and communication. Docents, both volunteer and staff, along with shop workers handle the largest share of the work required to provide the "Davenport House Museum experience." Over the past year, 10 new adult docents and 18 Junior Interpreters joined the work force. In addition to these were performers, caterers, musicians, dancers, writers, seamstresses, servers, greeters, flower arrangers, haulers and artists - all who committed time to the museum's slate of activities.

There were a number of extraordinary activities that deserve note and are worthy of celebration.

The Savannah Voice Festival (SVF) partnered with the DH and brought an original opera production to the house in November. It was not just performed in the house; it was about the house and HSF. Composed by Michael Ching, "Anna Hunter - The Spirit of Savannah" premiered in the Davenport House. The subject of the show was the dynamic personality of one of the founders of Historic Savannah Foundation and her personal journey to save her hometown. Soprano, Maria Zouvas, who is the SVF Executive Director, took the starring role with her young protégés from SVF filling out the cast of spectacular voices. For those who had the pleasure, hearing trained voices sing in the house was truly unforgettable.

Like the rest of the port city, the DH dealt with the rarest of events in January with the closing of the house for snow days. It was the first time in 35 years that the city has seen any snow, much less the paralyzing effect of the icy event of 2018. It was not just performed in the house; it was about the house and HSF. Composed by Michael Ching, "Anna Hunter - The Spirit of Savannah" premiered in the Davenport House. The subject of the show was the dynamic personality of one of the founders of Historic Savannah Foundation and her personal journey to save her hometown. Soprano, Maria Zouvas, who is the SVF Executive Director, took the starring role with her young protégés from SVF filling out the cast of spectacular voices. For those who had the pleasure, hearing trained voices sing in the house was truly unforgettable.

The Davenport House and HSF are planning great things for the future of the museum campus. More on those plans will be forthcoming over the next few months. As the DH was contemplating what the future holds, a skilled scholar showed up at its door looking for a thesis project about its past.

Kelly Westfield was finishing up course work in Public History at GSU-Armstrong Campus and was a skilled scholar who wanted to study the DH. She provided detailed materials on thirteen enslaved people who lived at the DH. Not only did she produce research to fulfill the requirements for her degree, she created and presented three different training sessions for DH docents. She provided detailed materials with biographical information on each of the enslaved workers. "We are happy beyond words to have the new research, but what is most gratifying is that our tour guide staff is excited about sharing it. We had a packed house for each of Kelly’s training sessions. The DH is ready to move ahead," said DH director Jamie Credle.

Several notable projects took place over the past year. The outstanding Honduran mahogany handrail in the DH main stair hall was refinished to show off the luster that must have attracted Davenport to select it for his fine home. Malcolm Robson of Robson Worldwide Graining touched up the faux-grained doors in the exhibit area.

A new website was also created for the museum, which is now online. Programs remain the DH’s strong suit. The living history program in October focused on General Lafayette’s visit to Savannah in 1825. Culinary historian Damon Lee Fowler presented his research on the Antebellum Cook to a packed house for November’s Harvest Lecture. In January the DH presented a custom-Yellow Fever program to all the students attending Chatham STEM Academy. Fifteen Savannah Arts Academy students graduated from the SAA Junior Interpreter Program. Three more JIs completed the museum’s summer program. The DH did three programs - Potable Gold: Savannah’s Madeira Tradition, Tea at Mrs. Davenport’s, Tea in the Garden, as well as walking tours in April and May and were well attended.

The shop continues to be a vibrant retail presence. In the past year, only twenty new vendors were secured to provide the DH with new shop items for visitors and locals as well. Many of these items are custom made for the DH and are only available in our shop.

With all the successes and experiences we had during 2017-2018, along with the new plans being developed, the DH is ready for the exciting future ahead. We look forward to seeing you!
HSF operates on a fiscal year beginning October 1 and ending September 30. As illustrated below, HSF uses 88 cents of every dollar raised to directly support the programs that achieve our mission. HSF is proud of the fact that we have garnered Gold Star status with GuideStar Exchange for the fifth year in a row. As an independent organization, GuideStar encourages best policies and practices and engaged Board of Trustees, as well as a professional staff, Historic Savannah Foundation adheres to the highest standards of financial accounting.

**Source of Funds FY2018**

- Fundraising: 33%
- Membership: 36%
- Programs: 7%
- Endowment: 8%
- Revolving Fund: 1%

**Use of Funds FY2018**

- Fundraising: 1%
- Programs: 16%
- Membership: 15%
- Revolving Fund: 36%
- Endowment: 8%

**ACTIVE MEMBERS**

* as of September 30, 2018

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