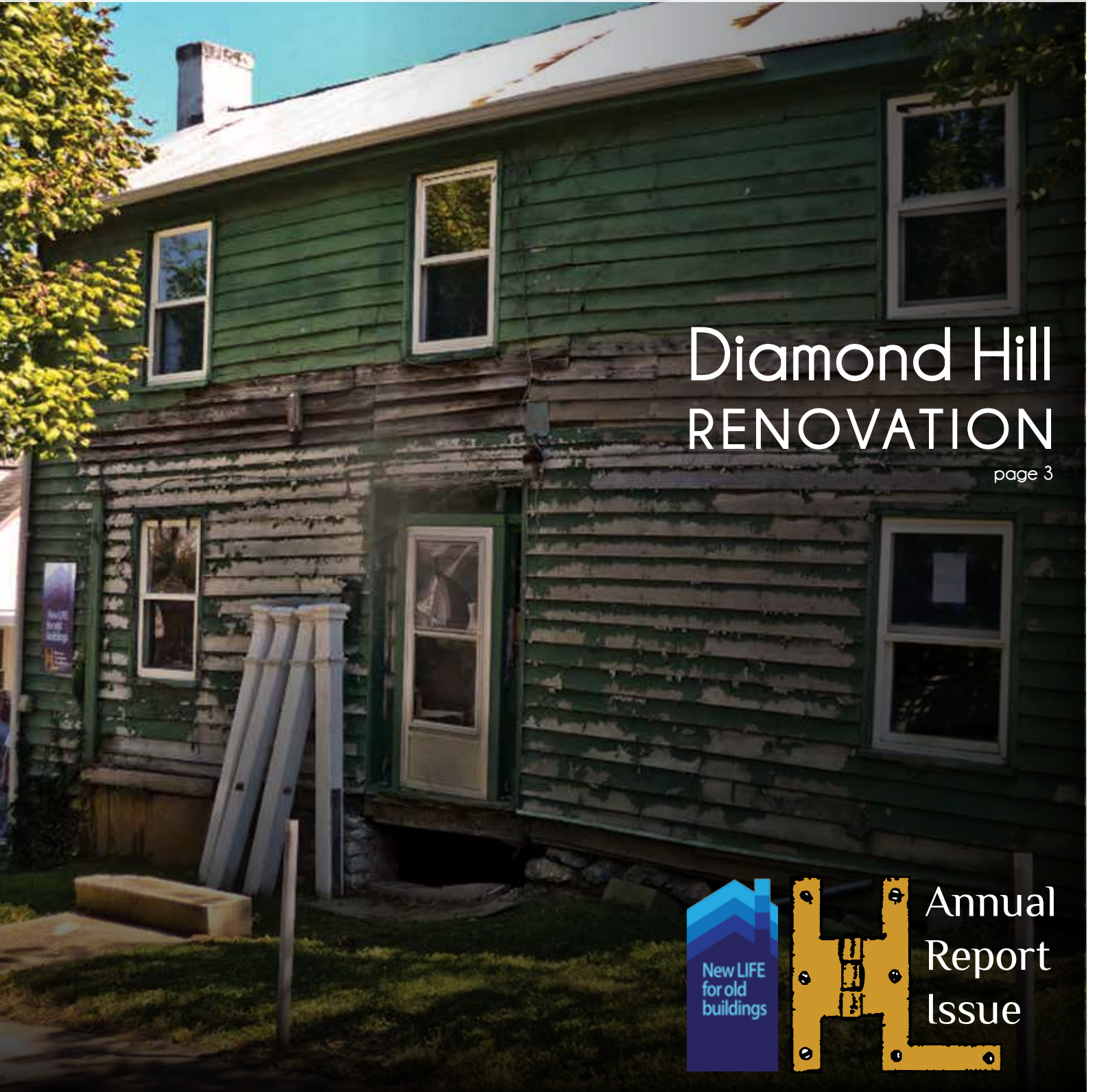


HISTORIC LEXINGTON

FOUNDATION

fall 2010

# Newsletter



## Diamond Hill RENOVATION

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New LIFE  
for old  
buildings



Annual  
Report  
Issue



# From the President's Desk

Dear Friends,

With this issue of the *HLF Newsletter*, you've undoubtedly already noticed a number of changes: we've introduced COLOR, given the graphic designers a free hand, and in general found new ways to present the kind of information you've come to expect from Historic Lexington Foundation. We hope you like it (feel free to share your comments and suggestions for improvement). If you'd rather receive the *HLF Newsletter* and future issues of our *News & Views* cards electronically, please let us know that too.

It's been my pleasure to serve as HLF's president this year, and I am proud to inform you that we've broadened our preservation work to include areas adjacent to downtown. Thanks to your support, we have a revolving fund (recently renamed the Lyle Preservation Fund in honor of Royster Lyle, Jr.) that has once again been put to work—this time to stabilize and restore the exterior of the 19th-century Holmes House in Lexington's historic Diamond Hill neighborhood. Please see the article elsewhere in this issue for more background on the project, the first phase of which will be completed by early January. Availability of the revolving fund for other community preservation needs will be very restricted until we sell the property, hopefully by spring 2011.

We're also feeling at a bit of a loss these days, as our longtime executive director Leslie Giles is leaving HLF (and Lexington!) for Colorado. We congratulate her and wish Leslie good luck in her new position as the coordinator of historic and architectural survey for the state historic preservation office. The organization has asked Don Hasfurther to serve as interim director prior to a broad search for Leslie's successor.

Other changes in Lexington's preservation community are taking place these days, namely VMI's likely acquisition of the Stonewall Jackson House Museum. Change is often unexpected and difficult, but at HLF we see these changes as opportunities. With your support, HLF will continue to operate efficiently and effectively to achieve its mission: to preserve historic resources, to promote heritage through education and public awareness, to enhance the community's beauty, and to encourage others in similar efforts. We invite you to be our partners in this process!

Sincerely,

Al Carr  
*President*  
*HLF Board of Trustees*

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# Diamond Hill RENOVATION

Lyle Preservation Fund  
Project Brings “New Life  
for Old Buildings”



**H**istoric Lexington Foundation began its newest “New Life for Old Buildings” project this spring with the April purchase of the Haden and Rebecca Holmes House, located at 205 Fuller Street in Lexington’s historic Diamond Hill neighborhood.

The project, funded through HLF’s donor-established Lyle Preservation Fund, includes the stabilization and exterior restoration of one of the neighborhood’s oldest dwellings, which the Holmes family owned for more than a century. Haden and Rebecca Holmes purchased the property in the early 1870s, when Fuller Street was still known as Clewes’ Alley; their home appears on the 1877 *Gray’s New Map of Lexington*. Haden Holmes is counted among the men who helped build the historic First Baptist Church on N. Main Street. Over a period of thirty years, the Holmes family remodeled the dwelling at least five times, expanding it from a one-and-a-half-story, single-room cottage into a two-story, three-bedroom house with more than 1,600 square feet.

The building attained its final form before 1900, and has been only minimally altered since then. After the property left the Holmes family in the 1970s, it was not adequately maintained, and began to deteriorate rapidly. Despite this period of neglect, the house retains nearly all of its historic architectural features, including five mantels, the 19th-century staircase, doors, and moldings, and a 1920s-era clawfoot tub.

Vacant for nearly ten years and being used for storage when HLF approached the latest owner with a purchase offer, the house was the neighborhood eyesore, with peeling paint, falling gutters, a sagging foundation, ill-fitting vinyl windows, and an overgrown yard. “Fortunately the metal roof is intact,” notes HLF Executive Director Leslie Giles. “That helped protect most of the structure from significant water damage, which is the most common preservation issue for unoccupied buildings.”

“The building attained its final form before 1900, and has been only minimally altered since then.”

In addition to needed structural repairs, HLF’s plans call for removal of failed interior plaster; repair of exterior siding and trim; reconstruction of the front porch; installation of period-appropriate windows; and exterior painting with historically informed colors. HLF intends to then sell the property to a preservation-minded buyer who would complete the interior rehabilitation. “This is what HLF did with the Alexander-Withrow House in the 1960s, the McCampbell Inn and others in the 1970s,

and most recently the Roberson-Phalen House on Jefferson Street,” explains Giles. “HLF has been wanting to address preservation issues in Lexington’s historic neighborhoods for some time now, and the Holmes House project offers HLF the opportunity to do that. We look forward to working with the neighborhood’s residents and property owners to encourage more preservation activity there.”

HLF Trustee Henry E. “Skip” Ravenhorst, A.I.A., is the architect of record for the project, and Mike Martin of Willow Pond Construction serves as general contractor for the stabilization and exterior restoration.



# Staff Changes

## Leslie Giles, Executive Director, Starts A New Phase In Life

At the HLF Board of Trustees' October meeting, Executive Director Leslie Giles surprised the board with the announcement of her resignation, effective mid-December. Leslie recently accepted a full-time position as Historical and Architectural Survey Coordinator for the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation at History Colorado, located in downtown Denver, and is slated to begin work there in early January.

Executive director since 2002 and a member of the HLF Board of Trustees from 1999-2002, Leslie and her husband, Dan Pezzoni, moved to Lexington in 1997 from Roanoke. They have two sons, Neil (11) and Jonathan (7), who are proud to be native Lexingtonians. "The kids have asked me if we can take Lexington with us when we move — I wish that were possible!"

"We'll miss our colleagues and the friends we've made in Lexington, but I couldn't pass up this opportunity to return to full-time preservation work in a part of the country that I've loved since childhood," notes Giles, whose father grew up in Denver and Boulder. "I'm so thankful that my family supports this career move, since it will be a huge change for all of us."

During her tenure at HLF, Giles spearheaded efforts to undertake a Preservation Needs Assessment Survey of the downtown historic district. She helped the city obtain Survey and Planning Grant funds from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to document historic residential areas that adjoin the downtown commercial area, obtained a significant grant for the revolving fund from the Beirne Carter Foundation, wrote and edited the *HLF Newsletter*, and led preservation workshops and downtown walking tours for audiences of all ages. She helped move the office three times over the span of eight years, and has coordinated with the city on the anticipated move of HLF's office to permanent space in the Miller's House at Jordan's Point (likely move-in date: next summer).

Leslie notes that she's "proudest of my work to help HLF save threatened properties," like the Roberson-Phalen House that Jean Dunbar and Peter Sils recently completed, and HLF's current effort at the Holmes House on Fuller Street. "Through these examples, we've really been able to demonstrate that good preservation practice is not just for museums. Every neighborhood has preservation-worthy older buildings, which are unique in their ability to connect us to our community's heritage and to help conserve resources for the future."

## Don Hasfurther, Former HLF Trustee, To Serve As Interim Director

The Board of Trustees plans to undertake a broad search for the new executive director in the coming months, but, in the meantime, former trustee Don Hasfurther has agreed to step in as HLF's interim director.

Don is a past director of the local chapter of Preservation Virginia, former executive director of L.D.D.A., and executive director of the D.C. Preservation League from 2000–01. He moved to Rockbridge County in 2001 and owns Hickory Hill Farm, off Forge Road in the southern part of the county.



“I’m so thankful that my family supports this career move”

# Thanks To Our Contributors

A list of those whose gifts were received between September 1, 2009, and October 31, 2010:

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*Financial reports for current and  
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# Preservation Month 2010

## Focus on Historic Transportation Resources

Beginning in the mid-18th century, the Valley Road, connecting Frederick County to the New River, ran through the Rockbridge area. Turnpikes and stagecoach lines connected it to counties beyond. By the mid-19th century, canal systems along the Maury (then North) River and the James River provided a commercial connection to Richmond and Tidewater Virginia. Following the Civil War, railroads became a dominant form of transportation linking east to west and north to south.

Many reminders of this heritage are still evident today in Rockbridge and surrounding counties, or are captured forever on maps and early photographs. For National Historic Preservation Month this past May, Historic Lexington Foundation, the Ruth Anderson McCulloch Branch of Preservation Virginia, the Rockbridge Historical Society, and others joined forces to host a series of events that focused on the history and preservation of our region's multi-modal transportation resources.

The Preservation Month Series, entitled "River, Road, & Rail," kicked off on Saturday May 15 with a presentation by Ann Miller, Senior Scientist and Architectural Historian with the Virginia Transportation Research Council. Ms. Miller spoke to a large audience at Kendal on the "History of Early Transportation in Virginia," with a western Virginia perspective on the ca. 1745 Valley Road and the evolution of roads, bridges, canals, and railroads in the Rockbridge area. She also highlighted efforts and opportunities to preserve these reminders of the past, and took questions from the audience.

On Tuesday May 18, the organizations co-hosted a panel discussion on a range of transportation heritage topics. Featured panelists included area scholars: Charles Bodie, Tom Kastner, Ken Koons, Matt Paxton, and Francis Lynn, who were joined by independent scholar Bill Trout, a specialist on the topic of canals and navigation systems, and author of *The Maury River Atlas* and *James River Atlas*.

On Saturday May 22, area historic preservation organizations were joined by the Rockbridge Area Conservation Council at Jordan's Point Park in Lexington to take part in "Celebrating Rockbridge's Transportation Heritage." Jordan's Point, located in East Lexington next to the present Rt. 11 bridge over the Maury River, is the place where the Valley Road, the North River Navigation System, and ultimately the railroad all entered Lexington, and where, even before the Civil War, industry thrived.

Reminders of the historic transportation systems are evident yet today, alongside their modern counterparts. A succession of covered bridges crossed the Maury there; the last one stood until the mid-20th century. The North River Navigation System had a terminal there in the mid-19th century. The railroad arrived in the decade after the Civil War, and operated until the 1970s. As late as the 1930s, prosperous industries operated at Jordan's Point. These aspects of East Lexington's heritage, and more, were interpreted and on display throughout the day at Jordan's Point Park.

Included among the Jordan's Point activities were a Historic Lexington Foundation-led tour of Jordan's Point Park, demonstrations and discussions of John Friedrichs, displays by the Virginia Canals & Navigations Society, and interpretative displays of the Jordan's Point transportation systems by artist Steve Harrington and Preservation Virginia. "We are indebted to the APVA Preservation Virginia volunteers before us who left us with an important archival collection of photographs of Jordan's Point and other sites in Rockbridge County," noted Arthur Bartenstein, director of the Rockbridge area branch of Preservation Virginia. Many of those images were on display on the 22nd.

Sunday, May 23, Historic Lexington Foundation and Virginia Military Institute offered tours of Stono, the home of Jordan's Point namesake John Jordan. Jordan was the region's most influential and productive builder and entrepreneur in the 19th century. Stono (sometimes called Turman House) overlooks Jordan's Point and is operated as housing for honored guests at VMI. VMI Museum Director Keith Gibson was on hand, and provided both an introduction to the property and some welcome refreshments on a warm afternoon.

Historic Lexington Foundation closed the month-long celebration with a reception at Hopkins Green, featuring a display of student art and written works submitted to HLF's 2010 Creative Writing & Art Contest, "River, Road & Rail: Preserving Historic Transportation Features."

# Photo Journal

Educational Events in Celebration of National Preservation Month



➤ Preservation Month keynote speaker Ann Miller, from the Virginia Transportation Research Council, addressed a large audience in the auditorium at Kendal on the subject of Virginia's historic roads, bridges, and other land-based transportation features.



➤ HLF, the local Preservation Virginia chapter, and the Rockbridge Historical Society co-hosted a roundtable discussion on local aspects of the subject of "River, Road, and Rail" in the community room of the recently renovated former county courthouse.



➤ Lexington-based stonemason John Friedrichs led a workshop and tour to describe the characteristics and preservation needs of historic masonry at Jordan's Point, including old bridge abutments, canal basin features, and the Miller's House.



➤ Trustees Leslie Cintron (center) and Bruce Macdonald (right) welcome Linda Castle to the HLF display at Jordan's Point during our Preservation Month celebration of transportation heritage.



➤ The Miller's House at Jordan's Point, undergoing rehabilitation at the time of this photo, was occupied on the ground floor and front porch by the Virginia Canals & Navigation Society and their extensive display on historic water transportation.



➤ One of Preservation Month's highlights was the tour of Stono, built in the early 1800s by Jordan's Point industrial and transportation entrepreneur John Jordan. VMI Museum Director Keith Gibson led the tour of the property (now known as Turman House), which is rarely open to the public.

# Photo Journal

Holmes House Rehab Project, September–November 2010



# Photo Journal

Miller's House at Jordan's Point Park, November 2010

