

News & Views

on the preservation issues that affect our historic city.

In mid-January of this year, Historic Lexington Foundation held its Annual Meeting and Luncheon at the Sheridan Livery Inn Banquet Room, with over 80 attendees. This yearly luncheon has become a popular event, anticipated with great pleasure by current or former trustees, supporters and guests. After a delicious lunch, a wonderful video was shown called "Preserving a Special Place (our town)" prepared by Bruce and Jennifer Young. Anyone interested in borrowing a copy should contact HLF. Awards were given out to four very deserving recipients, recognizing their concerned work in the area of historical preservation.

The first was to the Virginia Military Institute for their good work in the restoration of the historic stables. The VMI Stables replaced an earlier 1919 building on campus. The Stables building has served many diverse purposes: as the offices and classroom space for ROTC instruction (and horses were an integral part of the program back then). The building was next used for workshops and offices for the VMI Building and Grounds Department. Now the building returns to its original use—instruction of ROTC cadets, the VMI military uniform storage area, and offices for Army National Guard and Reserve components.

Lexington's newest restaurant—The Red Hen—garnered the second award. Stephanie Wilkinson and John Blackburn teamed up last year to restore a former law office on Washington Street to its former glory, and to modify its space to become one of the smartest, most



sophisticated downtown restaurants. Starting in 1897, the building has had many uses over the years—from offices to a grocery store, a commercial shop, real estate office, a book depository, and now, one of our town's finest eateries. Architect Lee Merrill of Commonwealth Architects undertook the difficult task of conversion. The space is small requiring the "shoe-horning" of the mechanical equipment without disturbing the essential character of the space. It isn't a large space, but contractor Tom Newhall, who incorporated king-post trusses into the interior décor, was equal to the challenge. The Red Hen is now up and running and popular almost every weekend night.

Buena Vista won the third award at the luncheon for their work in celebrating and sponsoring the annual festival in October called "Mountain Day." It focuses on the "lost arts" with live skill demos and informational displays related to local history and culture. The festival also features music, pony rides, a classic car show, antique farm machinery, living history interpreters, Native American dancers and much more.

Popular Lexington native, Matthew W. Paxton Jr., along with his wife Mary Raine received an award for a lifetime of preservation work in our community and for restoring and preserving the Zachariah Johnstone House. Matt Paxton is widely known in our town for his good work as publisher of *The News-Gazette* for some 42 years before retirement in 1994. He was also a founding board member of HLF in 1966 as well as the founder of the Lexington Downtown Development Association (LDDA) and has been an important leader of the local chapter of the APVA and the Lexington Presbyterian Church. We are all particularly proud of the work they both did in restoring their home, Stone House.

In our summer issue of *News & Views* last year, we announced that a historic fountain, used for the Stonewall Jackson Hospital courtyard in the 1950s, had been lost, then found and would soon be refurbished and installed at Hopkins Green. As the photos show, work has been on-going to complete this task, led by Cochran Lyle and his crew. Cochran is the son of Royster Lyle to whom the Fountain Garden will be dedicated later this summer. It will soon be gracing the green on the west side of the park.



Above: Matt and Mary Paxton. Left: Alec Wilder, Cochran Lyle, Pam Simpson, Dick Sessoms, Al Carr and Leslie Cintron.

