

“Reassembling 9,000 pounds of documents. It’s like a giant jig-saw puzzle!”

—Jerry McCoy, Peabody Collection Archivist

“A historic first happened today, one week shy of the first anniversary of the Georgetown Branch Library fire...it was a strange/good feeling for me to actually be able to pull out a house file that someone wanted to see.” —Jerry McCoy

The Georgetown Recovery and Restoration Fund is administered by the District of Columbia Public Library Foundation. Visit us on the web at: www.dcpfoundation.org

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“Insider Update”

Georgetown Library Recovery and Restoration Fund



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April 30 marked the one year anniversary of the fire that ravaged a neighborhood gem.

Even on a hot day the interior of the Georgetown Neighborhood Library remains strangely cold, the upper floor darkened by boarded up windows, its empty rooms punctuated by wooden trusses supporting the temporary roof, a pile of lumber, a pile of rescued furnishings. The exterior scaffolding has been removed and a new temporary fence surrounds the site. In a strange juxtaposition, Book Hill Park is greening and ablaze with daffodils and azaleas – bringing spring to a sad hilltop in Georgetown. Last year, the DC Public Library arranged to return water service to the garden after it had been interrupted by the fire. Many thanks to the Friends of Book Hill Park for bringing beauty to this hillside.

What’s the latest?

Thursday, February 7 the DC Public Library announced the selection of architects to design the library restoration/renovation: Martinez & Johnson, a longtime Georgetown firm with deep experience in working with arts and cultural centers, as well as historic buildings, is partnering with Hoshide Williams a Seattle-based architecture firm with extensive experience designing public libraries. This should be a strong combination as we move forward.

As part of the design process, the library and the design team will host a series of Community Meetings to seek input on the design and programming for the renovated library. It is anticipated that the Georgetown Neighborhood Library will reopen to the public in late 2010.

The first community meeting, “Hopes and Dreams,” has already been convened with a second planned for May 22, 6 pm, at St. John’s Episcopal Church. The next three meetings will allow the architects to present their design during progressive phases. During the next meeting, it will be far too early for floor plans or finishes. At this point the architects are looking at ideas for program space, program sizes and adjacencies. Once the program and space needs of the library are determined, more specific designs will be created and presented to the community for feedback. Each community meeting will present more detail as the process of design moves forward.

The Georgetown Neighborhood Library project will also include considerable landscape improvements in an effort to create a landscape around the library that is commensurate with the lovely Book Hill Park.

Over 300 donors nationwide have given to the Georgetown Library Recovery and Restoration Fund. The Fund now stands at \$97,171 with donations arriving regularly. Won’t you consider a gift to help us reach the \$100,000 mark?

Peabody Collection Returns to DC

On November 18, after being freeze-dried at a facility in Texas, an 18-wheeler pulled up to the MLK Jr. Library and unloaded 9,000 pounds of Peabody Room documents. In the rush to save documents from the fire, it was impossible to organize them, thus all documents must be inventoried and sorted. It is a huge task that will take many months. "It's like working a giant jig saw puzzle without knowing what the picture will look like," stated Peabody archivist Jerry McCoy.

Mr. McCoy has been opening every box – cataloging each item, assessing damage, identifying conservation needs, and grouping pieces of collections together. He is ¾ of the way through, with one last pallet of boxes remaining.

The first, and most damaged, book has already been sent out for conservation: the Taylor Family Bible, irreplaceable and of historic importance including a complete handwritten genealogy on the book covers and pages. As the conservation effort proceeds, before and after displays will be generated for the public.

Volunteers have been steadily working to photocopy and re-file the Georgetown House Files. While some files are now available, the complete collection is expected to be open by the Summer. Just over one thousand house files have already been photocopied with almost one thousand more to go. This group of files is currently being checked for quality and the folders hand labeled by a volunteer calligrapher. *In a new development made possible by this tragedy, all house files are now being entered in a database by street name – a resource not previously available which will vastly facilitate researching house histories.*

From adversity, comes a chance to look at and inventory the collection in a level of detail that has never been done. Every day brings new finds – things long forgotten or newly re-discovered. By the time this process is over, DCPL librarians will literally have touched every piece of paper in the Collection and will know it better than it has ever been known.

What's in a Box?

In the haste to save items from the fire, Peabody materials could not be organized as they were placed in boxes. Now, as each box is opened it reveals new and old treasures of the Peabody Room. One might find books from the general collection, the imprint collection (books published in Georgetown in the early 19th century), original materials from the Peabody Library, currency from a Georgetown bank, family letters, drawings, etchings, or photos. Some true treasures have already been found:

- An imprint book signed by Samuel Chase, a signer of the Declaration of Independence
- Five daguerreotype photos
- Books from the original Peabody Library – a library established in 1875, over two decades before an Act of Congress established the DC Public Library system

Washington Conservation Guild

Many thanks to the Washington Conservation Guild for choosing the Peabody Collection as its Angel Day project. Each year the Guild chooses one deserving project and provides professional conservators free-of-charge to do a one-day work marathon. They provided curators to create custom-crafted storage boxes to house Peabody artifacts so they would be safely stored until the new library opens. But they didn't stop there. The Guild then provided a generous donation to restore a Peabody Room artwork and fund further restoration efforts.

Adopt a Painting

The Foundation has established an "Adopt a Painting" program to offer donors the opportunity to pay restoration costs for a Peabody Room artwork and receive recognition in the permanent library. Three paintings have already been adopted.

Many thanks to Mary White, Wendy True Gasch, and the Washington Conservation Guild, our first "adopters!" Two of the paintings are currently being conserved by Page Conservation.

If you would like to adopt a painting, please call Anna Velazco, Executive Director of the Foundation at: 202-727-4943. Paintings range in price from \$1,100 to \$23,000.



Anna Velazco with "Notes for Books" co-chairs Stephen Meeter and Frida Burling



John Rosselli, Kathleen Doyle, Bunny Williams, and Louis Webre

Glittering Evenings...

"Notes for Books:" On October 25, 2007 St. John's Episcopal Church, Georgetown hosted a musical benefit evening "Notes for Books" at its Blake Hall. The event was co-hosted by Frida Burling and Steve Meeter and music was provided by Hanzone Productions. Many thanks to the notable Host Committee, Blake Hall Committee and vendors who donated so generously to this event. The event was free-of-charge and featured outstanding music, remarks by Ginnie Cooper, Chief Librarian, wine reception, and an evening aglitter with candlelight, flowers, and luscious hors d'oeuvres. Especially notable was representation from six Embassies, including the Ambassador of Ukraine. The event garnered \$45,000 and is catalyzing the formation of a constituency to support libraries in this city.

"Bunny Williams Author Talk and Book Signing:" On March 4, Doyle New York and John Rosselli & Associates sponsored a talk and book signing by renowned interior designer Bunny Williams followed by a wine reception to benefit the Georgetown Fund at Blake Hall, St. John's Episcopal Church, Georgetown. Over 183 people attended the sold-out event which raised \$7,705 to support the Georgetown Recovery and Restoration Fund. All expenses, except the wholesale cost of books, were generously covered by Doyle New York and John Rosselli & Associates. Many thanks also to the Proper Topper, our merchant partner for the event.

Stay tuned for future events...

Volunteers Always Needed

In order to conserve the Peabody document collection, each document must be photocopied onto acid-free archival paper and re-filed in archival folders. The Foundation put out a call (via the Current Newspapers) that garnered excellent volunteers (including a calligrapher) – one of whom went on to adopt a Peabody painting.

This is the unglamorous yet critical side of preservation as these volunteers copy and file thousands of documents. We owe many thanks to the kind souls who have come forward. If you would like to volunteer, please call Mark Greek at: 202-727-1446.

The Proper Topper Tops \$10,000

Special thanks and congratulations to our merchant partner The Proper Topper! Proprietor Anna Fuhrman designed T-shirts and a CD to benefit the DC Public Library and Georgetown Fund, was key in creating a library fundraiser at the 9:30 Club (one of the nation's first rock concerts for libraries), and served as merchant partner for our Bunny Williams event. Her efforts have garnered over \$10,000 to benefit the library. T-shirts and CDs are still available at her two locations: 3213 P Street NW and 1350 Connecticut Ave, NW or online at www.properopper.com.

Thank you...

for your continued support for this critical effort. Your kindness will allow us to speed up the restoration effort and, ultimately, create an even greater Georgetown Neighborhood Library.

For further information or to make a donation, please contact: Anna Velazco, Executive Director, at: 202.727.4943 or visit us at: www.dcpfoundation.org