

2011 NOMINATION FORM

Ida Lee Willis Memorial Foundation Historic Preservation Awards Program

NOMINATIONS must be postmarked or received in the Kentucky Heritage Council office by Monday, April 11. Entries may also be submitted via email to kyheritage@ky.gov or by fax at 502-564-5820. For each entry, submit a completed nomination form, narrative description and supporting documentation to:

Kentucky Heritage Council / State Historic Preservation Office
300 Washington Street
Frankfort, KY 40601
ATTN: Ida Lee Willis Awards

1. Nominee

Name Tara Kaprowy, Nina Johnson, Julie Harris-editor

Title / Organization The Sentinel-Echo, London, KY

Address P.O. Box 830 (5th St.)

City London State KY Zip 40743

Phone 878-7400 Email editor@sentinel-echo.com; Carrie Dillard

2. Award

(check one)

Memorial Award

Preservation Project Award

Service to Preservation Award

3. Description

Include a brief narrative description of the project(s) the nominee has accomplished. Relate this description to the criteria for the appropriate award.

Numerous articles, pictures and an editorial published by the Sentinel-Echo over a three month period informed the citizens of Laurel County of the impending loss of the historic property over 150 years old. The Pennington House stood on Broad Street, on land included in the original county seat of London incorporated in 1826 when Laurel County was established by the Kentucky State Legislature.

Reporter Tara Kaprowy highlighted the wasteful destruction of the Pennington House in her opinion piece, "Paved Paradise, Put up a Parking Lot." Ms. Kaprowy also interviewed Craig Potts for a frontpage headline article on implications of the appointed committee requiring demolition of the structure and then intending to apply for federal funding for the parking structure. (She was complimented for her accuracy in reporting.)

Nita Johnson, reporter on local government, made herself available to cover additional meetings to report the latest developments.

Editor Julie Harris supported preservation efforts by printing numerous letters from citizens against the historic property becoming a parking lot and with publisher Willie Sawyers, kept the news of this complicated and political struggle in front of the people.

4. Supporting Documentation

Attach or enclose any photographs, articles, publications or letters of support for the nominee that would assist in the determining the impact of his/her contribution. Before and after photographs should be included for a Preservation Project Award. When submitting by mail, materials may also be submitted on a CD/DVD attached to the nomination form. When submitting via email, please submit all files in one email in PDF format; do not send multiple files. For questions, contact Diane Comer at 502-564-7005, ext. 120, or diane.comer@ky.gov.

5. Submitter of Nomination

Name Donna Horn-Taylor

Title / Organization Designer (private citizen)

Address P.O. Box 423 (resident of Laurel County)

City Corbin State KY Zip 40702

Phone 606-528-6890 Email design-build@bellsouth.net

Sentinel-Echo.com

October 4, 2010

‘They paved paradise and put up a parking lot’

By Tara Kaprony
Staff Writer

LAUREL COUNTY, Ky. — How lucky am I that nearly every morning I get to drive to work, pull onto the parking garage and be welcomed by a sea of empty spots? Usually, I head to the exact same space, which is always free, next to a gray four-door whose driver seems equally concerned about avoiding dents and scratches.

Of course, given this blessing, imagine my surprise when I heard three downtown buildings would be torn down to make way for a huge gravel parking lot on South Broad Street.

Yes, the Laurel County Fiscal Court has decided to buy — so they can tear down — the rambling Victorian house used as the office for attorney Tom Weatherly, the white home that houses New York Life, and the home of Eulene Martin. The goal is to make more parking space available for workers of and visitors to the Laurel County Judicial Center.

Purchase price for the pack of plots? A cool \$930,000.

Worth it, n'est-ce pas?

The decision was made — and, yes, the sale is a done deal — in a special-called meeting last week.

Concerning the details of the transaction, I especially love the fact the lot will be gravel. What a nice, swift kick in the pants to London Downtown, whose members have worked tirelessly for the past six years to make downtown a place of which to be proud. With flowers adorning every available surface, stone pillars and strategic landscaping hiding parking lots, and pretty lamp posts lighting the way, it is. Throwing a huge gravel pit in the center of things runs entirely counter to those efforts.

In fact, shouldn't that move be worthy of the clamps of the city's nuisance ordinance?

It's also a nice touch that these buildings, unlike so many downtown, are actually occupied.

What frustrates me most, though, is there is a \$5 million parking structure just three small blocks away that more than suits the needs of downtown's parking. I say “more than suits” because if parking were really an issue, every available spot would be taken every morning. I can tell you from daily experience, that's just not the case. Moreover, the new judicial center is not attracting more traffic to downtown, it's just moving it down the street.

While doing research for this column, it quickly became clear I'm not the only one bothered by this move. It's the fact that the old Victorian is being torn down that seems to be the most upsetting part

of the equation.

It is true London's downtown is already woefully short on old, architecturally interesting homes. And this one might be one of the oldest ones left.

Property valuation administrator records show it was built in 1890 and has a storied past. In 1919, Henry Vincent Pennington bought the home from R.L. Pigg. Pennington founded Pennington General Hospital, which was later renamed Marymount Hospital.

A newspaper article in The Sentinel-Echo on July 4, 1963, speaks of "The Pennington House" as a London landmark. At the time, it was being renovated to give it "modern convenience."

"The house is fast becoming a model of comfort, with its efficient and attractive arrangement, providing present-day convenience in an atmosphere of yester-year," the article reads.

Granted, some say the home is now in a state of disrepair, but others say, if it were listed on the National Historic Register, there are funds available to help renovate the structure. Imagine what its potential might be. A beautiful old home for a family? A bed and breakfast? An artist cooperative? A museum?

Instead it's being reduced to something as demeaning as a gravel parking lot.

There's just got to be a better solution.

True, it may come down to actually walking three blocks to get to the judicial center. True, it may involve installing directional parking signs indicating where people can (easily) find spots.

But spending \$930,000 in order to prevent people from walking a short distance, and sacrificing London's history in the meantime, isn't money well spent to me.

As Margaret Zoellers, chairwoman of London Downtown's Design Committee, said: "No one ever came back to a city because they had great parking."

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