

January 15, 2004

A New Semester Begins- Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

The first semester starts January 20th. I'm taking two very different courses this time. The required course is Preservation Documentation. My instructor is Dr. Antoinette (Toni) Lee, who lives in Northern Virginia. There will be several assignments incrementally using more of the documentation techniques used for the standard writeups for historic properties and districts. I am in a bit of a quandary trying to decide which of my interests to use in the assignments. I could use all the information I accumulated for the article I wrote two years ago on Wilna, my home community. I could then prepare National Register style documentation on my home church, Union Chapel. OR I could do Lutherville and the school that I already have the information on. OR I could do something in Howard County.

So I called Dr. Lee to discuss options and make sure I understood the assignments. She said that the first three assignments could be on one area and the last, more comprehensive one, on a different site.

SO I am planning (at least for now) to start with Wilna and then maybe do the Lutherville Colored School as the final project. Part of that project is to create publicity flyers etc. for the site. Since I have already done that, it would be a shame to waste my prior effort!

The second course is Organizational Developments for Preservation Nonprofits. The instructor is Lizbeth Cort in Seattle, Washington. We are to use an organization self-assessment questionnaire distributed to board members and general membership, as well as interviews. I'm not too sure of what is involved at this point, as I haven't yet gotten the materials with the questionnaires from the Historic Trust. So I am a little anxious as to what will be involved.

January 17

Introduction to Rockville

I was getting anxious to get started, as the first assignment is due February 2nd and requires information from the organization. Although I still don't have the questionnaire, I thought I should make contact and go to Rockville. I wanted to go on a Saturday for the first time to avoid traffic hassles. I went the back way - #29 to #97 to #28. I have never been in Rockville! Have been to White Flynt Mall on Rockville Pike - but never actually in Rockville.

It reminds me a lot of Towson - County Seat, Courthouses, lawyers offices, high rises etc. all around an old core. Peerless Rockville is housed in what is called The Old Brick Courthouse. I met Eileen McGowan, the director. She has been with it since the beginning, and is extremely knowledgeable. They have quite an organization! They own an historic building that they lease and have an archive collection with part-time archivist in addition to their preservation work.

January 22

My Kingdom for a FAX

I finally got the course materials with the self-assessment guides in it. I called Eileen and she asked me to FAX the materials to her. If I had a FAX she would send back to me. Unfortunately, I don't. I think I can FAX out from the PC IF I remember how, but to get FAX in, you have to have the software set for a specific time to receive. Too awkward. So I took the forms - 6 pages worth - and FAXED from Staples. Cost \$1 a page! If I have to do that again, I will use the PC to send out, that's for sure.

I surely wish I had had the forms when I visited with Eileen - would have saved a lot of time and I would have known better what to discuss.

January 23

Good way to celebrate a birthday

My birthday today- celebrate it by working on my new "career." I mostly completed the first assignment for the documentation course today. It wasn't that difficult. I took the text from my Wilna history and reworked parts of it to fit the objectives of that assignment. It starts with a general description and then I put the history into the larger historical context of initial settlement to rural agricultural to suburban. Then we were to add at least 10 sources of local history. I ran out of space at 15 - could have used a lot more.

January 25

First Assignment Done

I finished up the documentation paper and posted it to the bulletin board. (Of course, at this point, mine is the only one there!) One of my fellow students emailed me that the paper was supposed to be single spaced - not double. Oh, no - not again, did I mess up on a procedural issue?? So I checked the instructions - it just said 5-7 pages. All the following assignments say single-spaced. So I assumed this one was double spaced. (I had 7 full pages and I had spaced and a half the historical sources in order to get them in) So I emailed Toni about it - I said I had lots of material I could add to meet the single space length if that was required. She said she had meant it to be single-spaced, BUT what I had submitted was sufficient as it was.

I see this sort of miscommunication as the one down side to the independent learning modality. It's so easy to miss something or not understand it correctly without face-to-face ability to hear and check questions.