

SAVE OUR
SEMINARY



AT FOREST GLEN

SOS NEWS

Winter 2010-2011
Vol. 20 No. 1

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Celebrating 22 years of Preservation and Education 1989 – 2011

Save Our Seminary (SOS) is the nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation, history, and future of the National Park Seminary Historic District in Forest Glen, Maryland. Evolved from farmland to resort hotel to private school for women to Army recuperation hospital, this historic site is now mostly revitalized as a residential community. SOS continues to play an essential role in its preservation and education.

This is the first issue of our newsletter for 2011, which will be published on a quarterly basis. We'll bring you the news on various activities of SOS, updates on ongoing projects, and a feature article on some interesting aspect of the property's history. Please contact us by email or phone if there is something in particular you'd like to know about, or if there is someone you know who would like to receive SOS News.

Free Special Programs in Ballroom

Once again this year, SOS will present four special public programs in the ballroom. Mark your calendar and RSVP for these first two free programs--

Wednesday, March 16, 2011 at 7:30 p.m.

The Army Years, Part 2

Join us as SOS board officer and Army historian Donald Hall presents the history of the Army occupation of the Seminary. In an October 2009 program, Don began with the Army's 1942 acquisition and initial renovation of the site. Now he will continue the history with descriptions of the Army's use of the site during and after World War II, and how the Seminary fit into Walter Reed's overall patient care plans during World War II, showing a short video of the site in 1953.

Saturday, May 14, 2011 at 7:30 p.m.

A Night at the Movies

Settle in with some popcorn and a drink for SOS Movie Night! Come see rare footage of the school, including National Park Seminary promotional films, highlighting student life and the campus buildings and grounds. Army-era footage will show the Odeon theater before its tragic demise as a result of fire. SOS videographer Steve Devoney will premiere a film showing comparisons before and after restoration, aerial shots, and other footage collected over many years.

Please RSVP to SOS for each program at info@saveourseminary.org or call 301-589-1715. Parking is available along Linden Lane and Ament Street near the gymnasium. Follow event signs at the intersection of Linden and Dewitt Drive to walk to the entrance of the ballroom.

Tours of National Park Seminary

SOS offers guided tours on the fourth Saturday of each month, March through November, plus two Sunday tours, one in the spring and one in the fall. The first tour of the 2011 season is Saturday, March 26, at 1 p.m. Check the Tours page of our website for the specific dates, times, and directions for the full tour season--or to arrange for a private group tour.

You can now also take a short self-guided tour via an interpretive trail, which makes a large loop through the Seminary property. Nine large trail markers contain a site map, a historic photo, and text that explains the history of what can be viewed from each marker. SOS worked closely with the developer, The Alexander Company, to provide the photos and text for the markers.

Treasures in the Archives

SOS recently added an important artifact to its collection of historic materials from the National Park Seminary years. We plan to highlight an interesting item from our archives in each issue of the newsletter.



This exciting acquisition is a communion set from the chapel, presented to the school by the junior classes of 1911 and 1912. The beautiful set is decorated with elegant Christian motifs and includes a pitcher, two chalices, and two serving trays. Each piece bears an inscription as a gift to National Park Seminary from the specific class.

Outdoor Sculpture Project Update

Although the principal focus of Save Our Seminary (SOS) has been the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the historic National Park Seminary buildings, we have long been concerned about the condition of the sculpture and other decorative features that adorn the campus. As the Seminary deteriorated over the years, much of the sculpture was lost, destroyed or put in storage. The current inventory of restored and damaged pieces on site or in storage includes twelve caryatids (column statues), a large fountain, several standing and reclining lions, a pair of cast iron lamps, and statues of Hiawatha, Joan of Arc, Cyparissus, Blind Justice, the goddesses Minerva and Silva, and others.

On May 1, 2010, SOS announced its commitment to restoring the outdoor sculpture by returning statues to their appropriate places on the campus, repairing those that are damaged, renewing those that have been neglected, and locating photographs and documentation for what has been lost. Our immediate priorities are to restore Joan of Arc, located in front of Senior House, and Hiawatha, located next to the Spanish Mission on Linden Lane; to repair and return the two reclining lions to their historic location near the American Bungalow on the fountain circle; and to clean Cyparissus at the edge of the glen. We expect the restoration of Joan of Arc to begin in the spring. A professional conservationist has examined it, proposed a work plan, and given us a preliminary cost estimate.

Future work will proceed as quickly as financial support allows. Thus far, SOS members and supporters have donated \$12,210 for the Outdoor Sculpture Project. Please consider a tax-deductible gift to Save Our Seminary, 9615 Dewitt Drive, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Donors at the Restoration Level (\$500), Renewal Level (\$1,000), and Remembrance Level (\$2,500) will be enrolled on an honor plaque at National Park Seminary.

Redevelopment Update

The last four of the eleven single-family style houses at the Seminary--the pagoda, chalet, American bungalow, and Colonial—are now close to being sold. Watch for future news on these houses being rehabilitated for single-family occupancy. The windmill was sold last year and significant exterior work should start this spring.

The historic Dog Bridge has been restored, connecting Linden Lane with the new two-level parking structure for residents of the National Park Seminary. At the entrance to the bridge is a beautiful new metal gate between stone columns. It resembles other long-gone gates from the Seminary years.

The Walter Reed Forest Glen Annex: The Annex Organizes for War, Part 3 by Colonel Donald Hall

(Part 1 appeared in Feb. 2010 issue and Part 2 in June 2010 issue of SOS Online newsletter)

It is important to remember that Walter Reed General Hospital, and the Forest Glen Annex, was part of a global hospitalization and evacuation system that the United States Army operated in World War II, and any discussion of the Annex's role in the war must be considered in light of that system.

After being evacuated from the point of their injury, soldiers entered into a series of hospitals of ever increasing complexity and capability as they moved further from the front lines. Each of these hospitals—Field, Evacuation, Station, and General—was designed to return the soldier to the fight as quickly as possible, and as close to the front as possible. In other words, to “Conserve the Fighting Strength,” to borrow from the motto of the Army Medical Department. Patients who were not expected to recover would be evacuated further to the rear for care. The most capable and sophisticated hospital in the Army’s health care system was the Army Medical Center, home of the Walter Reed General Hospital.

Early in the war, most casualties requiring hospitalization were evacuated to the United States for treatment and rehabilitation. As the theaters matured and expanded, particularly in Europe, patients would be held for longer periods if time if they were expected to recover—in some cases, for up to 180 days in the European Theater.

As soon as it was determined that a patient wasn’t expected to recover, he or she (but predominately he) would be evacuated to the United States. Patients being sent to Walter Reed General Hospital would arrive at the port of Baltimore aboard a hospital ship, and then be transferred to an ambulance train for movement to Washington. Probably arriving at the Takoma Park train station, they would then be moved by ambulance to Walter Reed. There, they would be provided further treatment and their prospects of recovery would be assessed. Some patients would be returned to duty directly from Walter Reed proper.

Other patients who were expected to return to duty would be transferred to a “Reconditioning Battalion” operated by Walter Reed at a former Civilian Conservation Corps camp in Greenbelt, Maryland (now the site of the Greenbelt Agricultural Center of the U.S. Department of Agriculture). There, they would participate in physical training and basic soldier tasks to build up their stamina so they could be returned to the fight as soon as possible.

Still other patients—those whose physical or mental condition was such that they required long term care or treatment—were transferred to a hospital run by the Veterans Administration, generally as close to their family as possible.

That left a third group of soldiers requiring care—those who were not going to return to the fight, but who were not going to require long term care. Those were the soldiers who were sent to the Forest Glen Annex. Predominately amputees and psychiatric casualties (mostly cases of “battle fatigue”—likely a combination of what we today would call PTSD and mild traumatic brain injury), they would spend their time at the Annex learning how to use their new artificial limbs or coping skills. In 1945, the Army built five cinder block classroom buildings to teach soldiers new skills, including typing, accounting, photography, radio announcing, and automotive repair to better equip them to deal with the world once they were discharged from the Army.

The Annex would continue to treat similar groups of patients until the “new” hospital at Walter Reed was opened in 1976, at which time all patient care ended at the Annex.

And those cinder block classroom buildings? They were demolished in 2005 to the cheers of the neighbors and the members of Save Our Seminary . . .



Photo Credit: International News Photos

Injured soldiers in balconies of ballroom of the former National Park College, May 1943

For Further Reading:

The Medical Department: Hospitalization and Evacuation, Zone of Interior.

<http://history.amedd.army.mil/booksdocs/wwii/thetechnicalservices/thetechnicalservices/hospitalizationevacuation/default.htm>

Borden's Dream: The Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington DC.

http://www.bordeninstitute.army.mil/other_pub/borden.html