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BUILDING ON THE PAST

Posted by Billy Hansen | Jun 1, 2018 | Columns,

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I love spending time at the Jones Memorial Library. I love getting lost in the rich history of our area and going down the many rabbit holes that capture my imagination. My favorite collection to explore, both for work and for fun, is the Architectural Archive.

While I had always heard that you could find original plans for old buildings and historic houses at the Jones, I never knew just how extensive their collection was until just recently. If you are in real estate, own a historic structure, love old houses, or just enjoy learning about the history of our community, you will want to know about the Architectural Archive and how its mission of preserving things from the past is now helping to shape the future.

Back in the stacks of the Jones Memorial Library, there are countless tubes, shelves, and cabinets filled with more than 4,000 sets of architectural plans from local architects and local projects. The list of architects represented in the archive includes names such as Pendleton Clark, Bennett Cardwell, Everett Fauber, Charlie Vail, Edward Frye, Aubrey Chesterman, William Burnham, J. M. B. Lewis, and, most famously, Stanhope S. Johnson. The Architectural Archive was established in 1980 to preserve the documents created by the late Stanhope S. Johnson and now includes representative work of over 80 architects and firms. The development and cataloguing of the collection was spearheaded by S. Allen Chambers, Jr., who literally wrote the book on Lynchburg's architectural history.

Notable properties and projects included in the archive include Virginia Baptist Hospital, the Allied Arts building, The Virginian Hotel, Oakwood Country Club, the Ivy Hill House, the Salvation Army Citadel, the City Armory, the Lynchburg City Memorial, and Monument Terrace. Schools such as Garland Rodes, Dunbar, Fort Hill, Peakland, Miller Park, and Marvin Bass are included along with plans for Presser Hall at Randolph College and Hopwood Hall at Lynchburg College. Plans for several older churches and even a cemetery can be found in the stacks. Along with commercial and institutional buildings, the Jones has plans for many historic houses in the Downtown, Boonsboro, and Fort Hill areas.



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The Architectural Archive also serves as a resource for those who want to restore and revitalize our community. When an architect starts an assignment involving the renovation or restoration of a historic home or building in our area, one of their first stops is often the Jones Memorial Library. They come on the hunt for old plans to act as a starting point for their project and help them see those things that have been hidden for decades behind floors, walls, or façades. If it's a historic tax credit project, the ability to see how a structure was originally designed is invaluable. If the Jones has what they need, copies of plan sets can be arranged with a local printing company.

Blair Smith, the principal architect with Dominion 7 Architects, is a frequent guest of the archive. As their firm dates back to 1945, they often come to the Jones to pull plans that their own company drew in the past. Blair says, "Looking at the penmanship and artistry, you see that there's a lot of love behind these drawings, which are pieces of art in their own right." Blair and his team believe in this project so much that they have been donating their growing portfolio of work on an ongoing basis. "We believe buildings are constructed for the benefit of all society, not just the building owner. We've reaped so much benefit from the archive, so we want this resource to be there for everybody," he says. Their preservation work now will be a blessing to the next generation of architects, real estate professionals, historians, and dreamers, just as their predecessors' forethought has been for them.

Like most everything at the Jones, the Architectural Archive is there now because someone said, "You know, this is worth saving," and then devoted their time, talent, and resources to making it happen. The Jones is that place for our community to preserve what we don't want lost to time, to learn what we never knew, and to remember what we once knew.

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The Jones Memorial Library is located on the second floor of the Lynchburg Public Library at the corner of Lakeside Drive and Memorial Avenue in the City of Lynchburg.



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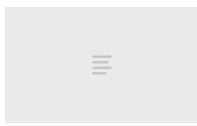
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