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Town saves its past from future predators

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Tucked amid tombstones in the quaint, sometimes ancient, streets of Haymarket is St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

The circa-1802 building originally was built as the district courthouse for Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun and Prince William counties and served as such until the state established the circuit court system in 1807. It was used as a school, church and civic hall before it became an Episcopal church in 1830.

Now St. Paul's is one of the few buildings left standing in Haymarket that predate the burning of the town during the Civil War.

The church for the first time will be afforded "protection" after the Haymarket Town Council's 4-3 vote Jan. 3 in favor of a historic overlay district covering the entire town. All buildings constructed before 1900 now are considered historic. They may not be demolished, altered or restored without permission from the town government.

Another of the historic structures that will be protected by the ordinance is the McCormick House, a log cabin built in 1800. It was the first house built when the town was planned in 1798. According to a report, "The Founding of Haymarket," by Charles J. Gilliss, the town was planned "with all streets 60 feet in width, and each main block ... divided into four lots. It will therefore be noted that each lot was on a corner and faced two streets."

The town was bigger before the Civil War than it was afterward. The population fell from 400 to 230 people, according to census figures. Before the war, it was home to wheelwrights, cobblers and a popular horse racing track, said town historian Sarah Turner.

Turner tried unsuccessfully to block the demolition late last summer of the Hulfish House, built by Garrett Hulfish, the first mayor after the town's 1882 incorporation. She might have been successful had the historic designation existed at the time.

"The owner would have had to go before [the] council" for permission to demolish the house, Turner said. The ordinance says no one can



Photos by Linda D. Epstein/Journal

St. Paul's Episcopal Church (left) and McCormick House (below), a log cabin built in 1800 now owned by Elizabeth Cobb, are two of the buildings in Haymarket protected by the recent historic district ordinance.



tear down, add to or renovate a historic building without permission," and sets up an Architectural Review Board to issue certificates of appropriateness for any work on the exterior of buildings. The ordinance does not apply to anything indoors. People also must apply to the board to put up or change signs.

"We want to maintain our quaint, colonial flavor," said Mayor John Kapp.

Although the Town Council had been weighing the idea of an historic district for more than a year, The Walt Disney Co.'s November announcement spurred Haymarket officials to action. It took just a month for the town to receive a favorable recommendation from the Haymarket Planning Commission.

The Planning Commission is in the process of giving the ordinance some teeth in the form of a manual of Historic District Guidelines. According to the guidelines, additions can't overpower the original structures and must be built so they can't be seen from the road.

But some people in town say many of the buildings along Route 56 — Washington Street in Haymarket — are eyesores and question the need for historic status.

"Homes on either side of Washington Street were destroyed for commercial buildings," Turner said.

Mike A. Goettele, a former craft shop owner who lives in the center of town, said: "I would like to see it retain its original history and design. That would draw people to the district."

The guidelines suggest preserving or refurbishing old doors, windows with real panes, and roofs of the pressed-tin or standing seam sort.

Painting over brick or stone is discouraged, and new paint on buildings must be similar in color to paint that would have been used when the building was constructed. Exterior lighting also must be historically accurate, or at least have that appearance.

No snow fences, satellite dishes or sliding glass doors will be allowed; foundations must be covered, and there may be no exposed concrete.

"With Disney coming, there's go-

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