

722-724 Main Street – Hughes Duplex: Update 11 – 2024

Rehabilitation work has continued over the past year and a half but has been frustratingly slow. Interior floor paving was completed in time for an open house in June – showing off the new floor and including a display featuring the history of the house and the Hughes family.



Neighbor Cindy Bonfini-Hotlosz created tins of loose tin memorializing three Hughes family members: Thomas Hughes, Sr. - Gunpowder Green (a complex green tea that rolled into pellets that bursts into a smoky concoction with wisps of nuttiness. It has just the right boldness that is needed to forge new frontiers); John Hughes - Wheeling Breakfast Blend (a strong blend of black teas, including some uniquely patriotic teas including those from the Boston Tea Party, this tea draws inspiration from the Hughes family's Highland roots to create a sturdy breakfast tea to start your day); and Eliza Hughes - Lemon Ginger Tisane (a uniquely herbal tea with hints of lemon, ginger and hibiscus - a delicious concoction that is exactly what a homeopathic doctor would prescribe to keep a person healthy and happy). Tea sales during the open house were used as a fund-raiser.



When concrete work was being done, contractors expressed a concern about the structural integrity of the rear façade of both halves of the building, so they could not do floor work in the rear (third) room of each. We then had the rear façade reinforced with temporary steel bracing, and rear room paving was postponed. The bracing will be removed when masonry work is completed and the rear walls are stable on their own.

Two grants were received in 2024:

- A \$10,000 grant came from Preservation Alliance of West Virginia through their Bruhn Revitalization Program. These funds will help with the renovation of windows in 724 Main, the south half of the duplex – in the right of the picture below. Windows in the north half (722 Main) had already been done, but work on the front of the south half and along the alley remained. Contractors have removed the old windows and are rebuilding them over the winter of 2024-25.



- A \$19,512 grant was received from the WV State Historic Preservation Office for masonry work on the rear of 722 Main, the north half of the duplex. This area is part of the building that has been temporarily supported with steel bracing (as shown in the photo on the first page), with special attention to the north wall (shown to the left), which shows signs of deterioration that threatened the property of the neighbor to the north.

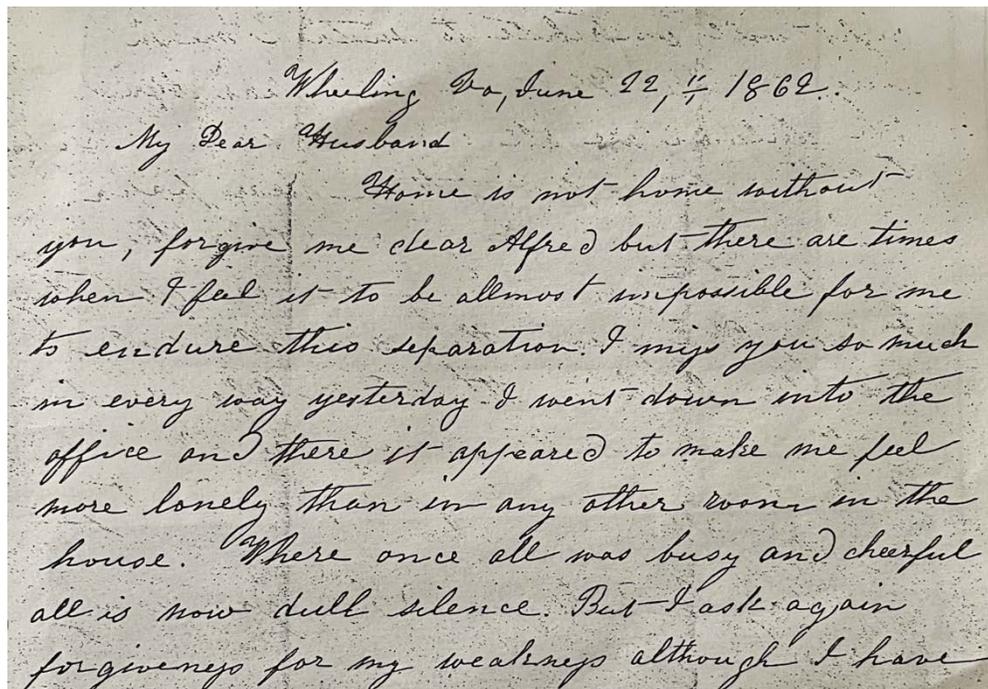
This work cannot be done during cold weather since the required lime-based mortar must cure for several days without freezing.

Both grants require matching funds, and donations have been received to cover the expected match.



During the summer of 2024, three troublesome trees were removed from the rear yard. One tree in particular was leaning toward power lines and the garage of the neighbor to the south. Donations helped pay for tree-removal costs.

Meanwhile, Jeanne Finstein has continued working with Hughes descendant Carin Ganjon to transcribe Civil War-era letters written in 1862 by members of the Hughes family. Copies of more than 100 letters have been found, with about two-thirds from Dr. Alfred Hughes to his wife Mary while he was imprisoned in Camp Chase, the Union prison camp in Columbus, Ohio. Most of the others are from Mary back to Alfred. (More information on the family can be found in earlier updates, with most details in Update 9). Alfred's letters go into great detail describing life in the prison camp; Mary's relate day-to-day life in Wheeling, her own health, and news of the couple's five young children. The letters show that both Alfred and Mary continued to believe it was right for Alfred to refuse to sign the Oath of Allegiance to the Union, although their seven-month separation was difficult for both. A sample of Mary's letters is below.



Prior updates can be seen at <https://wheelingheritage.org/friends-of-wheeling/>.