

## *Our Community's Need for Memory – Our Community's Need for History*

by

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An historian once wrote that “history makes a nation.” If that is so, then most certainly one can also conclude that “history makes a community” – such as here in Stafford. Our nation – like this community – is in many ways a model for other nations. America’s story, like that of Stafford’s, is a story of both progress and recognition that tradition has a place. The trick is to balance the two in order to provide a better quality of life for as many of our people as possible.

This brings us to our local architecture. In that array of commercial buildings, houses, places of worship, and government structures, we interact with what makes us human. Americans in general have never fully embraced history as something simply relegated to books containing dates and timelines. We are a practical people – hence our understanding of the past is more times than not what we can see and touch. Public buildings that predate us capture this impulse. Our public buildings function as an autobiography of who we are, both in our community and in America at large. They induce us to remember – and to also forget. These buildings evoke our deepest passions – and also work to induce us to repress what we do not especially like about ourselves. That is the point – we have to be very careful about what we preserve – and equally careful about what we choose *not* to preserve. It is my hope that here in Stafford there is agreement that a balanced approach to preservation prevails – let us continue to perpetuate the American ideal of striking a reasonable medium between progress and the necessity of tradition as represented in our preservation efforts.