

# A Place of Rare Loveliness

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Popodicon, on the campus of Shepherd University in Shepherdstown, WV, has a unique place in the history of the University.

Built in 1907, Popodicon was the retirement home of Henry W. Potts. Originally from Pottstown PA, Henry fell in love with the area and one Eleanor Powell, while overseeing the building of the Norfolk and Western Railroad Bridge spanning the Potomac.

Henry Potts hired Winchester Architect Stuart Edmonds to design the house. The design chosen for Popodicon was a Colonial Georgian style which was built by local contractor S.A. Westenhaver who had built much of Shepherd College.



For the design of the landscaping and formal Gardens, Mr. Potts turned to Philadelphia Landscape Architect Oglesby Paul. Mr. Paul had studied Horticulture and Agriculture at Harvard University under Arthur Shurcliff who served as the Chief Landscape Architect at Colonial Williamsburg and none other than Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., famous for designing New York's Central Park.

Oglesby Paul was responsible for many designs in the Philadelphia area, but is most known for his designs for High Gate Mansion in West Virginia, Montpelier in Virginia, and The Hershey Mansion in Pennsylvania.

In 1908, Popodickon was celebrated by the Shepherdstown Register as "A handsome new home..." and described it as "... one of the most notable improvements in Jefferson County ..."

The house boasted 16 rooms, three bathrooms, and its water was pumped from an artesian well. Even more impressive was the 64 acres of land Mr. Potts had amassed through private purchases. He continued to buy adjacent property, and the estate grew from 64 acres to over 120 acres.

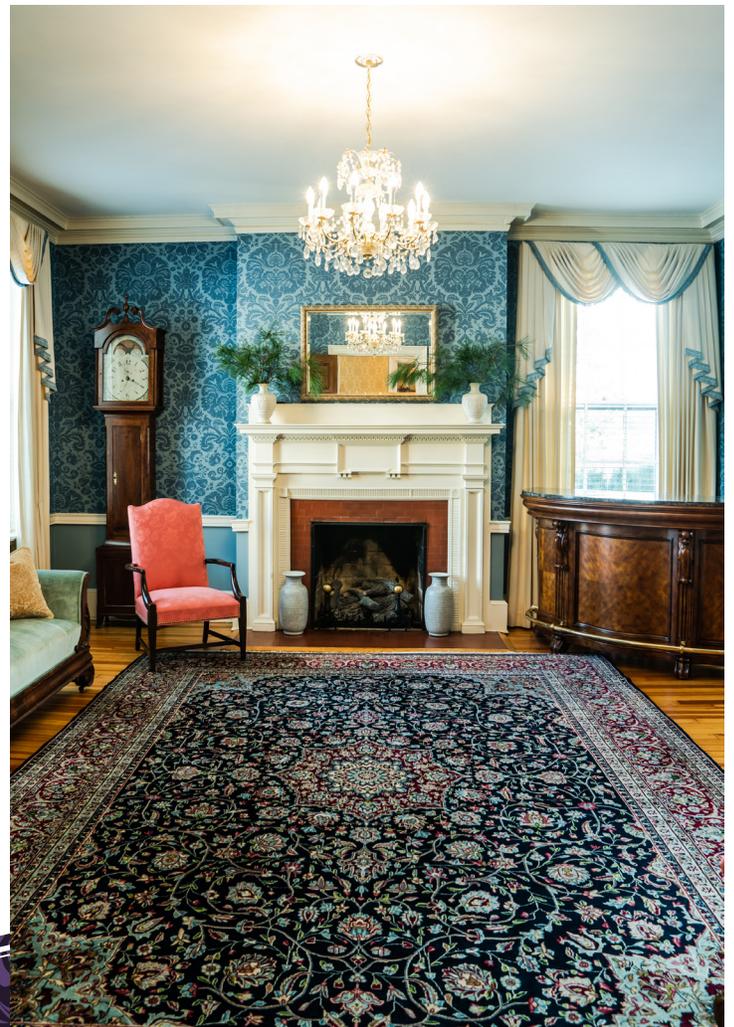
The Potts family named the estate Popodickon after a family home in Colebrookdale Township, Pennsylvania,

named Popodickon which dated back to the 1700s. Its name was derived from the legend that Delaware Chief Popodick was buried on the property.

The Potts family lived at Popodickon from 1908 until 1964 when the family sold it to the State of West Virginia to be used to expand then-Shepherd College.

The land was put to good use, allowing the school to expand in what is now the West Campus while Popodickon itself served as the School President's Residence.

College President, Oliver S. Ikenberry served as President of Shepherd College from 1947-1964.





He had already been expanding the school, gaining accreditation from the North Central Association in 1950. The addition of the Popodicon estate allowed him to continue building onto the college; when he retired in 1964, he was succeeded by James A. Butcher who served as President until 1988.

Much as his predecessor had done, Butcher continued expanding the school, not only in size, but by adding programs in Social Work and Nursing. He saw to the building of the Physical Education Complex and the Frank Center for the arts.

In 1989 Michael P. Riccards became the school's 13th President and continued to build up the campus.

Riccards was followed by David Dunlop in 1996 where he served until 2007 when Suzanne Shipley took the helm until 2015. Sylvia Manning served as interim President until Dr. Mary Hendrix took the job in 2015.

Through it all, Popodicon had served as the President's Campus Residence. Current President Dr. Mary Hendrix uses it as her business residence, holding campus functions on the estate.

In 2016, the Friends of Popodicon (FOP) was founded.

Their mission: to restore the building and grounds to their former glory. This all-volunteer organization is chaired by John Miller, of Miller Designs in Gerrardstown, WV. He also serves as the team lead for restoring, preserving, and decorating the interior of Popodicon. The leader for the effort to restore and maintain the gardens is noted landscape designer Elisabeth Staro.

The FOP spearheads the restoration by raising funds for the work. They also oversee the design work to restore Popodicon to her former glory.

Popodicon's interior contains many pieces that were donated to the university, including some of the original furniture created for Popodicon. Earlier this year, Julia "Happy" Potts Grehan,

granddaughter of Henry Potts, returned to visit Popodicon bringing with her several pieces including her grandfather's desk. Ms. Grehan grew up at Popodicon and was married there in 1963.

Other pieces include Former President Ikenberry's Grandfather Clock, along with the works of local artists which hang on the walls.

When discussing the historical aspect of Popodicon, John Miller was quick to point out that Popodicon is not all that historic. It is, after all, only one hundred and eleven years old.

Interior restoration has included renovating the kitchen from its 1980's style to a modern kitchen designed for catering and reworking the adjacent powder room.

"When the Potts moved into Popodicon, they moved in with a lot of their furniture, which was more Victorian than Federalist," John explains.

Although they are improving Popodicon and upgrading the house, the original design was sound. The front of the house was built with three layers of brick, while the back used two.

Heading up the effort to restore the grounds and formal gardens of Popodicon is landscape designer Elisabeth Staro. Working with an endowment from the Monarch Alliance, Elisabeth and the FOP, are working to make the garden a way station for monarch butterflies on their migration route.

The first step was to clear the overgrowth and invasive species that had crept into the gardens. While the FOP cleaned out the beds, they hired James Dillion of Native Havens to design the new garden.

When finished, the gardens will support the full lifecycle for pollinators such as the Monarch Butterfly. The design includes native plants that are deer resistant and a design that will require little to no maintenance while providing three seasons worth of coverage.

Much like the interior, the gardens will feature works of local sculptors.





**Popodicon serves the University & Community by holding functions such as:**

- Bodice Project (October, 27, 28 & 29, 2016)
- Friends of Music Under the Stars 6-25-17
- Jefferson County Historical Society Picnic 8-2-17
- Friends of the Byrd Center Reception 10-4-17
- Jefferson High School Dance 10-7-17 and 10-27-18

- American Conservation Film Festival Reception 10-12-17
- Potomac Pedalers Touring Club Back Road Century Post-Ride Event for 2,000 people 9/17/17. (A second post ride celebration was scheduled for 9-16-18, but was canceled due to the hurricane)
- Contemporary American Theater Festival VIP Reception 3-23-18
- Delta Sigma Pi Alumni Event 4-10-18
- Shenandoah Potomac Garden Council House Tour 4-28-18

- Council of Accounting Educators Conference Reception 9-14-18

**Upcoming events include:**

- Several holiday receptions (both university and private functions)
- A graduation party in June of 2019
- Several weddings and rehearsal dinners
- Friends of Popodicon Holiday open house is scheduled for the second weekend in December



Elisabeth Staro



John Miller

Popodicon remains, as The Shepherdstown Register declared, "... a place of rare loveliness," and will remain so with the help of organizations such as The Friends of Popodicon.

For more information on Popodicon, renting its facilities or volunteering with the Friends of Popodicon, please visit: [Shepherd.edu/Popodicon](http://Shepherd.edu/Popodicon)