

Ruth Ann Overbeck

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Historian Ruth Ann Overbeck, 64, Dies; Top Authority on Capitol Hill Buildings

Ruth Ann Overbeck, 64, a historian who was a leading authority on the origin of buildings on Capitol Hill and whose research also included work to help pinpoint a World War I-era explosives dump near American University, died April 2 at Sibley Memorial Hospital. She had liver and pancreatic cancer.

Ms. Overbeck, who lived on the Hill was active in efforts to preserve historic homes there. She wrote a number of articles and reports on the area, about landmarks such as Eastern Market, the Marine Barracks and the Washington Navy Yard. She conducted walking tours there and published two Capitol Hill guides.

She was a founder of the local Preservation Trust which works to preserve historic facades, and a guide and lecturer for the Smithsonian Resident Associates. She was an adjunct professor of public history at West Virginia University.

Her research included work for the U.S. Naval Academy, the Justice Department and engineering and architectural firms, as well as homeowners interested in the history of their properties.

She also did an archival investigation for the Army Corps of Engineers six years ago on the dumping site of several deadly chemical agents developed at the World War I experimental station near AU.

Ms. Overbeck was a native of Denison, Tex., and a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin, where she also received a master's degree in history. She worked for an architecture firm in Texas before moving to the Washington area 30 years ago.

Ms. Overbeck wrote chapters on Capitol Hill and Deanwood for "Washington at Home," a book published by the Historical Society of Washington.

She was a member of the society and of the Committee of 100 of the Federal City, the Capitol Hill Restoration Society and the Capitol Hill Association of Merchants and Professionals. She was a lieutenant governor of a local district of Kiwanis International.

Her marriage to George Perez ended in divorce.

Survivors include her husband of more than 24 years, Robert J. Hughes of Washington.