

Arlington Historical Society

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Arlington Historical Society

June 2019

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Arlington Historical Museum

1807 South Arlington
Ridge Road

Open: Fridays: 12:30-3:30

Saturdays: 1:00-4:00 pm

Sundays: 1:00-4:00 pm

Or by appointment for
group tours

Ball-Sellers House

5620 3rd Street, South

Open April through
October

Saturdays 1:00-4:00 pm

Or by appointment for
group tours

AHS Board Meeting

July 23, 2019, 7:00 pm

1805 South Arlington
Ridge Road

AHS Members Welcome

The AHS Board of

Directors meets the 4th

Tuesday of each month.

President's Dispatch

Greetings,

It has almost been a year since I retired from a 39-year career in Arlington Public Schools. During my tenure, I saw many changes. One notable change was the introduction of Virginia Standards of Learning in the late 1990s. These standards provided content objectives that needed to be "covered." However, as teachers we learned that it was much more important to "discover" and "uncover" history so that our students would have an understanding of history.

This year has been a great journey of discovering and uncovering Arlington's history. Our annual banquet held in May allowed us to learn the real story behind the desegregation of Arlington Public Schools; where Arlington provided the "chink in the armor" that would eventually end Virginia's massive resistance movement. That evening, we honored the Hamm family who were on the front lines of this desegregation movement and heard from noted biographer James McGrath Morris who documented the desegregation struggle in Arlington by interviewing the families who were working to make changes.

Earlier, in October, we provided a program that uncovered the story of the desegregation of Arlington Public School athletics. The men and women athletes who took part in this desegregation joined us to share their stories and rekindle friendships of the past. In February, we learned more about the desegregation story in the larger historical context of the region and what the future might bring and in April, author Wilma Jones shared her insights on growing up in the section of Arlington once known as Halls Hill. Throughout all these experiences, we were able to uncover history that is not often shared.

Marcus Garvey once said, "A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots." Indeed, this quote directs our work as AHS as it is our stories of the past that allow us to envision the future. With the election of our new Board of Directors, we have officially begun another year of uncovering and sharing the history of Arlington. This will be a special one as coming up in January 2020, we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the naming of Arlington County. As we look back at all the progress we have made in the last 100 years, we have many stories to uncover. We hope you will join us in this endeavor.

Upcoming AHS Events

July 11, 2019



General George Washington's Road to Yorktown

This revolutionary era story follows the movements of the Continental Army and allied French forces on their way to the war's final battle: Yorktown. Historian Robert Selig will focus on the trek through Maryland and Northern Virginia and the logistics of crossing the Potomac with thousands of men on foot and horseback. *(Reinsch Library Auditorium, Marymount University Main Campus, Glebe Road, 7:00 pm)*

August 16-18, 2019



AHS at the Arlington County Fair

Visit the AHS indoor booth at the county fair. Test your knowledge of Arlington history and win a prize, find your home on a historic map, see unusual artifacts from the AHS collection, and learn more about what AHS has planned and how YOU can help AHS tell Arlington's story. *(Indoor booth at Thomas Jefferson Community Center, 3501 2nd St., South)*

September 12, 2019



The Local History NoVa Parks Preserve

Northern Virginia Parks Chairman Mike Nardolilli will discuss the creation of NOVA Parks 60 years ago and the history that can be found in the three parks in Arlington (Potomac Overlook, Upton Hill, and the W&OD Trail) and elsewhere in the NOVA Parks system. *(Reinsch Library Auditorium, Marymount University Main Campus, Glebe Road, 7:00 pm)*

September 21, 2019



AHS is at Clarendon Day

Visit representatives of the Arlington Historical Society at our table at Clarendon Day. Test your knowledge of Clarendon history, check out the AHS selection of historical artifacts related to Clarendon history, Give us your opinion about what history topics you'd like to learn more about at future AHS public programs, Learn about our two museums: the oldest house and the oldest schoolhouse. *(Activities are centered around the Clarendon Metro station, 1:00-6:00 pm) (Volunteers needed!)*

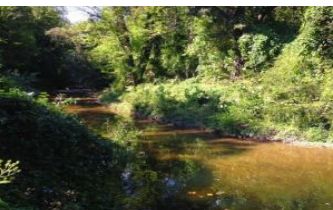
October 12, 2019



A Good Soldier at Arlington House.

We will follow the Civil War record of a good soldier, Robert Sneden, through the artwork he left behind. Historian Dean DeRosa will share Sneden's paintings that depict rare images of Arlington and Northern Virginia during the Civil War. Join us for a rare view of colorful images of what soldiers saw in what is now Arlington during the Civil War. *(Reinsch Library Auditorium, Marymount University Main Campus, Glebe Road, 7:00 pm)*

November 14, 2019



The Bottom: An African-American Enclave Rediscovered

Historical researcher Jessica Kaplan brings this small Arlington African-American community to life based on newspapers articles, Civil War soldiers' drawings, and Southern Claims Commission documents and provides us with a tiny window into the lives of its residents. *(Reinsch Library Auditorium, Marymount University Main Campus, Glebe Road, 7:00 pm)*

Information on all these events and more about AHS—including how YOU can support AHS's work—can be found on our website: <https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org>

The AHS Annual Banquet: A Night to Remember

AHS's Annual Banquet was a powerful evening. Over 135 members and guests gathered at the lovely Washington-Golf and Country Club to partake of the delicious fare and to hear our keynote speaker, historian, James McGrath Morris. Mr. McGrath spoke eloquently about the African American led struggle to desegregate Arlington Public Schools, especially the vital planning and organizing of local activists such as Dorothy Hamm and the Thompson family. Though white Arlingtonians were involved in the battle, local blacks were in the vanguard and performed the heavy lifting. McGrath also discussed the personal courage and resolve of all the students and parents who challenged the system that brought down Virginia's attempts to sabotage integration. According to McGrath, the effort to desegregate Stratford Junior High School in Arlington proved to be "the breach in the ramparts of Massive Resistance."

Embodying the truth of Mr. McGrath's words were the 2019 Cornelia B. Rose, Jr. Award winners, Edward, Bernard, and Carmela Hamm, the children of Dorothy and E. Leslie Hamm. They graciously accepted the award in the presence of their extended family and the AHS community. Edward, while discussing his personal

journey during the desegregation, recalled being deemed "unqualified" for Arlington's white schools. He then cataloged his many professional successes despite his so-called unfitness. Eventually, both he and Bernard attended Stratford and W&L. Carmela who has been instrumental in helping AHS share the history of Dorothy Hamm and local desegregation, spoke movingly about carrying forward her parents' legacy of community service.

One long-time AHS member nicely summed up the evening: "This was the best banquet I can remember."



Honorees: Bernard, Carmela, and Edward Leslie Hamm, Jr.

Arlington Historical Society Membership

If you received this newsletter in the mail, Congratulations! You are one of more than 370 Arlington Historical Society (AHS) members as of June 2019. Thank you for your continued support of AHS. Most annual memberships terms end on June 30, 2019. Member renewal emails or letters will arrive in early July. If your membership has lapsed, please be sure to renew promptly to continue your benefits! Members who are new or renewed since March 1, 2019, are already members for 2019-2020. Life members are just that: Life Members! No need to renew annually.

Membership benefits include:

- ⚙ Helping preserve and promote Arlington history and build community in Arlington
- ⚙ Invitations to member-only events
- ⚙ Subscription to the quarterly AHS newsletter
- ⚙ Subscription to Arlington Historical Magazine
- ⚙ 10% discount at both AHS museum gift shops
- ⚙ Priority ticketing and discounts on annual banquet and other ticketed events

- ⚙ Recognition in Arlington Historical Magazine (Sponsor, Business, and Life members)
- ⚙ Free admission/shop discounts at 1000+ cultural institutions through the North American Reciprocal Museum (NARM) program (Sponsor and Life members)
- ⚙ Recognition in the annual banquet program (Business and Life members)
- ⚙ Recognition in the AHS newsletter and social media (Business members)

Membership Levels	
Individual: \$35	Dual: \$50
Sponsor: \$100	Life: \$1,000
Business/Non-profit: \$350	



Each issue of the AHS Newsletter offers “Three Sisters” to showcase three historical things that make Arlington so unique. The Three Sisters consist of a person, a place, and an artifact from the AHS collection.

Person: James Parks



James Parks was born a slave on the Arlington Estate in 1843 to Lawrence Parks and Patsy Clark. He was freed during the Civil War but continued to live on the estate working for US Army where he helped construct Fort McPherson and Fort Whipple (now Fort Myer).

In 1864, when 200 acres of the Arlington estate were set aside as a cemetery for the Civil War dead. Parks stopped

building forts and began digging graves. He continued to work at Arlington Cemetery until 1925. That year Congress voted to restore the mansion to its 1861 appearance and Parks was instrumental in providing the historical information needed. He gave specific locations for the wells, springs, slave quarters, slave cemetery, dance pavilion, old roads, icehouse, blacksmith shop, and kitchens.

When James Parks died in August of 1929, he left behind one of the few slave accounts on record from which Arlington House was restored. His testimony provided a more complete record of the people who inhabited the plantation: the slaves and the Custis-Lee family.

Parks was the only person buried in Arlington Cemetery who was born on the estate and he was laid to rest with full military honors: a fitting tribute to a man whose life linked Arlington's past and present.



Place: Arlington National Cemetery

This national landmark is one of the iconic features of Arlington, Virginia, alongside Arlington House and the Pentagon. Made famous for being the final resting place of America's Armed Forces, and other American heroes and patriots including Presidents, Supreme Court Justices, and astronauts. This place is more than an ordinary cemetery as it also stands as a monument to all the men and women who have risked their lives to serve our country and defend our freedom.

Artifact: Dr. Charles Drew's Saxophone

This saxophone was owned by Dr. Charles Drew. Dr. Drew was a surgeon and a pioneer in medicine. His research in the field of blood plasma and how to store it helped save countless lives—especially in World War II when blood needed to be close to the battlefields. He was also a high school star athlete who earned a scholarship to Amherst College in Massachusetts. Always a music lover, he authored his fraternity's hymn and played the saxophone.

The saxophone was donated to the Arlington historical Museum by his daughter, Dr. Charlene Drew Jarvis. It is a C-Melody saxophone and is a little larger than an alto saxophone and a little smaller than a tenor saxophone.

According to a professional saxophone player who visited the museum, the C-melody sax was notorious for being out of tune so not many saxophonists perform on them now. This sax was probably made in the 1920s.

This artifact is a reminder that even the extraordinary people who do extraordinary things also have some fun just living their lives. You can see this saxophone at the Arlington Historical Museum in the African American Experience exhibit.



Arlington Historical Museum Matters

From February through May, the Arlington Historical Museum was honored to feature in its temporary exhibit case, many mementoes from the personal papers of Dorothy Hamm, courtesy of the Hamm family. Irreplaceable photos and newspaper articles from local papers told the story of the struggle by Arlingtonians to get schools open to African Americans after the Supreme Court ruled that separate was not equal. The articles and artifacts have been safely stored archivally as Carmela Hamm will be working on publishing her mother's memoirs.

The summer exhibit is a series of unique artifacts chosen by the AHS curator, Haley Wallace. They include an early 20th century medical bag, cheerleader shoes (with pom-poms) from a W&L cheerleader, a postcard-photo of an Arlington woman in the March 3, 1913 Suffrage Parade in DC, and more. It will be on display through the summer.

The museum has had several new artifacts added to the exhibits. These include postcards from Luna Park in south Arlington, and a Civil War-era ring found where Fort Richardson once guarded approaches to DC.

We need docents. If you like history, this is the volunteer activity for you. You'll learn all about local history, meet your community, and talk with fellow history enthusiasts. The museum offers a self-guided tour so docents don't lead tours but are there to field questions and enable visitors to see the schoolroom upstairs and ring the Hume School bell. At a minimum it's only three hours a month on a Friday, Saturday, or Sunday afternoon of your choice. No previous experience is required, just a love of history. Email: info@arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org



The historic Hume school, home of the Arlington Historical Museum

Ball-Sellers House News

On the first Saturday of April, the historic Ball-Sellers House opened its door to a crowd of people listening to members of the Monumental City Ancient Fife and Drum Corps. The musicians played songs that the house's first family would have heard. Living historians Scott and Dakota Springston posed as colonial Virginians John Ball and his friend of that era Andrew Donaldson who was among the first white settlers in Cherrydale. To get the house ready for its seasonal debut the weekend before, a record number of volunteers stepped up to clean the house, the two sheds, and the grounds. The house looked great and on our opening day we even sounded great!



About a month later, the house's 100-year-old wisteria vine was in full bloom. All the work that volunteers did trimming last year really paid off and the new growth provided ample opportunity for beauty. The big purple blooms covered the vine and filled the air with a lovely scent. Karl VanNewkirk timed his Encore Learning local history class just right and had a special session focused on Arlington's colonial history under the fragrant blooms.

Kevin Vincent hosted the annual George Washington's Forest History Walk in May and led a record-sized crowd in the footsteps of Washington when he surveyed his wooded property after the Revolutionary War with John Ball's brother Moses

The Ball-Sellers House, the oldest structure in the county, is open for free tours every Saturday afternoon (1-4 pm) through October. A knowledgeable docent will help transport you back through time as you find out how the house was built, who lived there, and why it is of historic importance. (5620 3rd Street, South)

AHS in the Community

AHS operates two museums, the Arlington Historical Museum at the Hume School which is open Friday, Saturday, and Sunday afternoons throughout the year and the Ball Sellers house museum which is open on Saturday afternoons from April to October. These museums are staffed by a terrific group of volunteer docents.

In addition, AHS volunteers participate and share their expertise in many community endeavors. These volunteers use their knowledge of Arlington history to inform the public. In the past few months:

- Karl Van Newkirk and Tom Dickinson have continued to make historical presentations to local community groups.
- Karl Van Newkirk also teaches a course on Arlington history for the county's Encore Learning program. He has also been leading the AHS effort to get all the Arlington Historical Magazines online at ArlingtonHistoricalSociety.org for public use.
- Mark Benbow, George Axiotis, John Tuohy, and Annette Benbow set up an AHS table at Potomac Overlook Park during its annual May Day event. The AHS representatives provided a sample of hands-on artifacts for visitors that represented the history of the site.
- Kevin Vincent led the annual George Washington's Forest History Walk on May 11 in the Glencarlyn neighborhood. This well-attended event has become an annual event that the community is proud to have in its neighborhood.
- Cathy Hix, Robert White, and senior experience intern Seth Black spent a day with the kindergartners of Oakridge Elementary teaching the students about Arlington of the past through pictures, stories, and artifacts.
- Elise Milstein, Lois Chadbourne, Dakota Springston, Scott Springston, and Annette Benbow, kicked off the season opening day event at the Ball Sellers house by reenacting colonial life and hosting a Revolutionary era fife and drum corps.

Stewardship of Your Money

AHS depends on donations and membership fees to allow us to carry out our mission. In the past few months, we have been fortunate to receive two key donations. In April, former ACPD Captain Kevin Riordan of the Arlington County Police Department 9-11 Fund presented AHS with a \$10,000 donation to educate Arlington citizens about the events of 9-11. In May, the Aurora Hills Women's Club gifted the AHS with a check for \$5,500.00 to provide support for the maintenance of the Arlington Historical Museum at the Hume School. These two donations, along with the generosity of our banquet sponsors have allowed us to continue our work in the community. Some of the highlights include the following:

- Adding content to the AHS website (<http://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org>) including articles, videos, and photos. We get many requests for information about Arlington and we are able to direct those contacting us to information that is on our website. We hope to continue to attract viewers to this site.
- Upgrading the website software to speed response and prevent hacking.
- Working to Go Green! We are working with Classic City Consulting to add features to our website that will allow us to conduct many administrative functions online.
- Arlington Historical Museum at Hume School: Now that the company that was doing water pipe work in Aurora Hills has moved out of the parking lot, we are making plans to redo the lot. In addition to using the lot for visiting Hume School, the lot is used by neighbors during inclement weather and for overflow traffic.
- Ball-Sellers House: Painting of the house will be finished this spring and the attic window that is damaged will be repaired.

AHS receives no operational funding from the county, so we depend on your donations to AHS to continue this work. We want you to know how we use your donations and we are grateful for all your support in helping us share the history of this great county.

Members Approve Amendments to Constitution

By Gerry Laporte, AHS Secretary

At their annual meeting on May 9, 2019, the members of the Arlington Historical Society approved two amendments to the Constitution of AHS that had been recommended by its Board of Directors.

The first amendment allows the Board of Directors to expand to 12 the number of directors at large who serve on the Board alongside the four elected officers and the Museum Director if the latter is a volunteer. The previous limit had been 10. Approval of the amendment means that the Board could increase its size to 17 members in total. All officers and directors at large are elected by the members at their annual meeting, although the Board can fill vacancies that occur after the annual meeting.

The second amendment clarifies that the AHS Secretary may send notices to members of proposed amendments to the Constitution by either postal mail or electronic transmission, which would include email. Relatively recent amendments to Virginia law permit corporations like AHS to send notices to members by electronic transmission if the member consents. AHS has not yet solicited the consent of any members to receive member notices by email, but plans to start doing so soon. Under Virginia law, a member who gives consent to receive notices by electronic transmission may withdraw the consent at any time.

The full text of AHS's current Constitution and Bylaws is available at <https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/about/constitution-and-bylaws/>.

AHS Officers and Board

Members

2019-2020

President: Cathy Bonneville Hix

Vice-President: Robert White

Treasurer: John Tuohy

Secretary: Gerald Laporte

AHS Board of Directors

George Axiotis

Annette Benbow

Sean Denniston

Tom Dickinson

Gerald Haines

Tracy Hopkins

Jessica Kaplan

Annette Marrero-Oliveras

Dakota Springston

Karl VanNewkirk

Museum Director: Mark Benbow

You can read more about AHS Officers and Board members on the AHS website:

<https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org>

We are thrilled to have the support of these local businesses.

BCN Homes

<http://bcnhomes.com>

Clark's Litho

<http://www.clarkslitho.com>

EagleBank

<https://www.eaglebankcorp.com/>

E. G. Reinsch Company

<http://www.egreinsch.com/>

Glass Distributors, Inc.

<https://www.glassdistributorsinc.com/>

John Marshall Bank

<https://www.johnmarshallbank.com/>

National Capital Bank

<https://www.nationalcapitalbank.com>



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Arlington, Virginia 22210

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History Awaits Come Visit!

Arlington Historical Museum

1805 South Arlington Ridge Road
Arlington, VA 22202

Hours: Friday 12:30-3:30 PM,
Saturday and Sunday 1:00-4:00 P.M.

Ball-Sellers House Museum

5620 Third Street South
Arlington, VA 22204

Hours: Saturdays 1:00-4:00 P.M.
(April through October)

The Arlington Historical Society, founded in 1956, is a non-profit organization incorporated under Virginia laws. The Society supports research, collection, preservation, discovery, and dissemination of Arlington County's history. Board meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:00 P.M. in the Arlington Historical Museum at the Historic Hume School and are open to the public.



Website: <https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org>

Email: info@arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org

Facebook: [ArlingtonHistoricalSociety](https://www.facebook.com/ArlingtonHistoricalSociety)