



Arlington Historical Society

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ARLINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
WINTER 2017 + 2018

NEXT MEETING:

2/08/2018; 7:00 p.m.
1805 South Arlington Ridge
Road, Arlington, VA 22202.

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*INDICATES MONTHLY PRO-
GRAM AT MARYMOUNT UNIVER-
SITY

03/08/2018: Carry On: American
Women and the Commemoration
of the First World War*

04/07/2018: Ball-Sellers House
Opening Day!

04/12/2018: Unearthing History
Findings from Ball Sellers*

05/10/2018 A Civil Life in an
Uncivil Time: Julia Wilbur
The AHS Board of Directors
meets the first Tuesday of every
month, at the Hume School, at
7pm. Remember board meetings
are open to all AHS members!

Presidents Dispatch

Johnathan Thomas, AHS President

Recently, the Arlington Historical Society hosted one of our Speaker Series programs with Arlington writer George Axiotis narrating a slideshow detailing the background of his book, 'Two Hills,' a Civil War fiction filled with "ninety percent" facts extensively researched by Mr. Axiotis. The lecture detailed the characters in the book – all real citizens of then Alexandria County, as well as the soldiers and dignitaries of the Civil War – and highlighted the many resources the writer used. Having been an early reader of the book and living off North Glebe Road, I found myself not only intrigued to hear the details of the Arlington locations in the book but also the scribe's mention that his best resources were back issues of our *Arlington Historical Society* magazine, a magazine our members have received annually since 1957.

Listening to Mr. Axiotis, I found myself recalling Robert F. Maxwell's 1993 epic movie *Gettysburg* and the characters who played major roles in the film. If you have not seen the movie I highly recommend renting it, if for no other reason, just to watch the part when Confederate Brigadier Gen. Lewis Armistead (played by Richard Jordan) tells the ancestral stories of "the boys from Virginia" just before their fateful attack on that horrible third day of battle at Gettysburg. Armistead also had a powerful scene the night before the battle when he pondered, with Lieutenant Gen. James Longstreet (played by Tom Berenger), how his old friend and schoolmate, Union Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock (Brian Mallon), was doing just up the hill.

The real Battle at Gettysburg took place in 1863, but two years earlier Hancock was a central figure in Alexandria (Arlington) County. Tactfully described by Mr. Axiotis in his book, Hancock and his men were camped on the old Vanderwerken property, just off North Glebe Road on 35th Street, and Hancock made the old house his headquarters. In the distance was his former friend, now nemesis, Gen. Longstreet, with his location described to be where JV's Restaurant is today on Route 50 in Falls Church. Just another reminder of how interesting and important Arlington County history remains.

Our mission at the Historical Society is to research, retain, and reveal Arlington history to our members and other interested folks. We are here donating our time and simply ask that if you enjoy what we provide please continue your donating to the AHS. We have made it easier than ever with our new website <https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/>.

AHS Adds to Our Collections

AHS has recently acquired a new piece of history for our collection, the railing from Tom Sarris Orleans House! Tom Sarris Orleans House in Rosslyn created many memories for Arlingtonians, and now, thanks to the work of AHS members and friends, we will be able to preserve part of that memory before it was lost forever. Do you know of other cool parts of Arlington history that are in danger, or that you would like to donate to the AHS? Let us know, and we can keep the memories of the past alive. **Pictured:** AHS Member Robert White loads parts of the railing prior to transporting to Hume School.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Upcoming Public Programs:

03/08/2018: Carry On: American Women and the Commemoration of the First World

War: Allison Finkelstein will explore how American women commemorated the conflict and often erected traditional monuments, such as Arlington's Mother's Tree.

04/12/2018: Unearthing History: Archaeological Findings at the Ball-Sellers House: Join archaeologist Patrick O'Neill as he discusses the archaeological work at the Ball-Sellers House. O'Neill will showcase a selection of artifacts, and show the findings of the field work over the course of the last year. Don't miss it!

05/10/2018: A Civil Life in an Uncivil Time: Julia Wilbur's Struggle for Purpose: Local author, Paula Whitacre describes Wilbur's experiences against the backdrop of Alexandria, Virginia, a town held by the Union from 1861 to 1865; and in Washington, DC, where Wilbur became active in the women's suffrage movement and lived until her death in 1895.

06/14/2018: Immigration and its Impact on World War I and Arlington: Join Zack Wilske (a historian for US Citizen Ship and Immigration Services), as he explores the ways the United States responded to immigration during WWI, (including internment camps for German nationals, and stricter border crossing procedures), and how that impacted the United States, and Arlington.

Directions to Marymount (for our Public Programs):

A number of people have asked questions about parking at Marymount when AHS has its events at the university's Reinsch Library at 2807 N. Glebe Rd. If you enter the main entrance off of North Glebe Road you can ask the guards for a spot. It's a short (but hilly) walk to the library on a nice evening.

You may also park in the main garage, accessible off of the 26th Street North entrance. There is handicapped parking available right outside the library as well if you enter the campus from the 26th Street North entrance. We hope to see you there!

Other Historical Events:- History around the Community

04/07/2018: Ball-Sellers House Opening Day! Don't miss the biggest opening day in the Washington D.C area, the opening of the Ball-Sellers House! April 7th 2018 marks the opening of the oldest house in Arlington, and kicks off another season of interesting events, and even more chances to learn about history!

04/21/2018: George Washington Forest Walking Tour: Join a local historian for a wonderful tour of some of the historic sites in the Glencarlyn neighborhood. This tour begins at the Ball-Sellers House, and will visit springs, a historic mill site, and other historic sites. The Tour will begin at the Ball-Sellers at 1:30pm, and will go on, rain or shine!

06/09-10/2018: Cherrydale 125th Anniversary Celebration: the 125th celebration will include a reunion, photos and a display at the Cherrydale Library! Look for details from Cherrydale 125th and Cherrydale Library!



Every issue, the Arlington Historic Society Newsletter will offer the feature Three Sisters, showcasing three things that make Arlington what it is. There will be a person, a place and an artifact from the AHS collection, all illustrating a unique facet of the history of Arlington.

Person of the Issue:

Selina Gray is one of Arlington's unsung heroines. Selina Gray and her husband, Thorton Gray were the enslaved persons of G.W Parke Custis. Selina was Mary Anne Randolph Cusits Lee's personal maid, and Mary Lee entrusted the keys of the Arlington Estate, as well as the care of the Washington artifacts and the family cats to Selina when hostilities broke out in 1861. Selina and Thorton's son, Harry, built the still standing house on Quinn Street, an Arlington treasure. The Gray family is still active in Arlington, including a descendant who served on the HARLB in the 1980s.



Artifact of the Issue:

One hidden gem in our collection is a 1937 Washington-Lee High School class ring! This ring belonged to Margaret Francis Stiegal. Margaret was in the Drama Club in 1933-1934 and Auxiliary from 1934-1937. During her senior year, she served as Platoon Sergeant. The 1937 Yearbook states that she "is always active and cheerful" and has a "pleasant disposition and a vivid personality." According to Margaret, 1937 was the last year that the class ring had "WL" in the center. After 1937, a gem stone was used in the center instead. This ring, along with other memorabilia from Margaret's childhood, was donated by her nephew Richard



Place of the Issue:

Arlington is made up of many historic places, homes, streams, forests, stores, parks and schools. Each issue we will feature a different one of these historic places, and showcase a little of what makes Arlington, Arlington.

The Harry Gray House, also known as the "Shotgun House", or the Old Brick House on Quinn Street, is one of Arlington's most historic homes. Sitting atop its hill, the house is a shining beacon of the importance of the Gray family in our community's history. This was the first brick townhouse in what is now Arlington County, built on ten acres of land on Johnson's Hill, by Harry Gray, son of Selina Gray. Appearing on a brick beside the door, along with "Harry Gray" is the date "May 1st, 1881". The house currently sits in the Gray Subdivision of the Arlington View Community, is beautifully restored and renovated, and is a State Historic Landmark. It was modeled after townhouses in Foggy Bottom — "the place to be in the 1880s". Sometimes it is called the "shotgun" house, for the term describing a townhouse where you could shoot a shotgun at the front door, and the bullet would go out the back without hitting any walls. The Harry Gray House is not only an important architectural landmark, but an important part of Arlington's heritage, a reminder of our past, and a very important family of Arlington — the Gray family.



HISTORY HAPPENINGS— THE VINE—

The Wisteria Vine that grows at Ball Sellers House is truly one of the natural marvels of Arlington County, and always guarantees a great show! “The Vine” in this newsletter will cover Ball Sellers House, and include the latest information from Ball Sellers.

Winter at Ball-Sellers

Ball-Sellers is quiet and currently closed for the winter season, and won't open again until April. However, in the 18th and 19th century, winter was a very active time at the Ball-Sellers House. Just because it was winter, did not mean that chores went away, or the life of a yeoman farmer or tailor became easier. John Ball could have spent his winter splitting shingles to fix his roof (just like the ones currently on the original roof today), William Carlin would have spent the valuable daylight hours completing his tailoring work, sitting by the window, utilizing as much light as possible— perhaps Carlin used the waning winter daylight to mend garments, or to craft 25 green coats for Mr. Wilson of Alexandria! Both owners would have kept the winter holidays in the best fashion they could afford to, utilizing a Yule Log at Christmas, visiting relatives or friends (perhaps a visit to Moses Ball was in order for John Ball, or perhaps a trip to Alexandria). If there was heavy lifting or moving to be done (say a millstone needed to be moved),. Winter provided the perfect opportunity for it, as the frozen ground made it easier to move heavy objects utilizing sledges and runners over frozen ground and snow, as opposed to muddy and rutted wagon roads. John Ball might have been thinking of the shad run, when the Potomac River teams with shad, or of how best to take care of his tender trees and crops during the bitter winter. Thoughts would be towards the Spring, and the thaw, and what the next season would entitle. Thoughts of the flowers, of the gardens, the fruit trees, the herbs, of the sunlight and not having to deal with bitter could would be on the mind of any resident of the Ball-Sellers House. Today our thoughts are similar, and I know many look forward to the opening of the Ball-Sellers House for the Spring, and for the blooming of the famous 130+ year old wisteria vine that graces the arbor behind the house.

In Memoriam: John Courtright

Mr. John Courtright, 78, a good friend, as well as a Member and supporter of the Arlington Historical Society, passed away on September 16, 2017. John was a lifelong resident of Arlington. He was an avid historian, with special interests in local and military history. John was a graduate of Washington-Lee High School. He spent his career working for the Department of Defense and was a Colonel in the U.S. Army Reserves. John was an active and enthusiastic member of the Arlington Civil War Sesquicentennial Commemoration Committee from 2009-2016. He gladly volunteered his time and expertise to take on any task that would further the goals of this important historical committee. John always went out of his way to inquire about the well-being and interests of others. His energy and enthusiasm, and his knowledge of and love for history, were contagious. He will be greatly missed by his many friends and family. As a final gesture of his commitment to and his passion for history, John requested that any donations in his name be made to the Arlington Historical Society. On behalf of AHS, we thank and remember John for his thoughtfulness and generosity.

Tom Dickinson
Friend, colleague, and companion.

**DO YOU LOVE HISTORY?
DO YOU WANT TO MEET
COOL PEOPLE?
DO YOU WANT TO BE
AROUND TANTALIZING
ARTIFACTS AND
AMAZING HISTORY?
IF SO VOLUNTEER!
AHS NEEDS
VOLUNTEERS!
If interested,
Contact Volunteer
Coordinator Robert
White
(robertwhite7@aol.com)**

NOTICES AND NOTIFICATIONS

NOTICE OF BYLAWS AMENDMENTS

By Gerry Laporte, AHS Secretary

The Board of Directors of the Arlington Historical Society recently amended the Bylaws of AHS. On November 7, 2017, the board amended the Bylaws to continue the requirement to hold an annual meeting of members of AHS on the second Thursday of May each year, but to delete the requirements to also hold bimonthly member meetings on the second Thursdays of September, November, January, and March. The Bylaws require AHS to notify its members of this change in the next newsletter of AHS, which is the reason for this notice.

The recent amendments will not affect the current policy of AHS to sponsor public lecture programs on the second Thursday of most months. So, the monthly lecture programs will continue, although not in conjunction with the four previously required bimonthly member meetings. The annual meeting in May will continue to include a lecture component.

The Bylaws continue to provide that special meetings of members may be called at any time by the President of AHS, a majority of the Board of Directors, or upon the written request of ten members. If called, it's likely that a special meeting would be held in conjunction with an AHS monthly lecture program.

You can find an updated copy of AHS's Constitution and Bylaws on its website at www.ArlingtonHistoricalSociety.org.

DO YOU HAVE OLD FILMS OR PHOTOGRAPHS OF ARLINGTON?

If you happen to have or find any old films or photographs in your attic or closet that show scenes of Arlington "back in the day", AHS would be glad to give them a new home. Contact us and we will be glad to help preserve your part of Arlington History.

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Public Program Recaps
September: Another Side of Integration, with Brenda Cox as Moderator,
Recap by Dakota Springston

Another Side of Integration was one of the most moving programs that AHS has offered in many years, and one that was attended by our current Lt. Governor, Justin Fairfax! The panelists shared their stores of life in Arlington, and their personal experiences with segregation, and integration within the Arlington Schools system. Both current and former Arlingtonians shared their stories of life in Arlington, both before and after the 1950s and 1960s school integration. Some of the panelists shared stories of the harassment they faced in Arlington, both in and out of school. Several panelists pointed out some of the systemic racism they faced, and how they worked to overcome it, and how some of the problems they faced still manifest themselves today. Stories were recounted how black students were not allowed to join clubs, how white students shunned their new classmates, and how even teachers would discriminate against their new pupils. The presentation brought to light many stories that were in danger of fading into obscurity, and of instances that were being swept under the rug, and reminded viewers of the importance of not falling victim to prejudice, as well as providing insight into what a community can and should do. The panel shared the work that they have done, as pastors, as citizens, as teachers, and school principals to bring their community together, using the lessons they learned at Hoffman-Boston and Drew School, at Wakefield, at Glebe Elementary, at Churches and in life in and around Arlington, working together to make our community a better place for all to live and thrive.

November: “Code Girls of Arlington Hall: The Untold Story of the American Women Code Breakers of World War II” by Liza Mundy, Recap by Max Gross

Local journalist Liza Mundy spoke to a standing-room-only audience (estimated above 175) at Marymount University about her book *Code Girls* (New York: Hachette, 2017). As the American commitment to World War II drew many men into military service in the European and Pacific theaters, personnel shortages led both government and industry to recruit many women into work on the home front. Both the Navy and the Army looked to young female graduates of American Colleges and Universities to perform the highly secretive work of code breaking. In all about 7,000 young women were recruited, and Ms. Mundy has finally been able to tell their story. Sworn to secrecy on penalty of death, these women never talked. One of Ms. Mundy’s interesting discoveries was that the sons and daughters of the women she was able to locate never knew of their mothers’ work during the war. Working with the Freedom of Information Act, the eventual cooperation of the National Security Agency, records in the National Archives, and finally interviews with about twenty of the women she was finally able to locate, the author was able to use their stories and memories plus the documentation she discovered to tease out the larger picture of the code girls of Washington. Weaving her account around the women she actually was able to interview, Ms. Mundy gave her audience a brilliant account of an episode of local (as well as national) history that without her work might have been lost forever.

October: “Washington’s Capital Brewmaster: Christian Heurich” by Mark Benbow, Recap by Max Gross

Before the passage of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution (Prohibition) which went into effect in January 1920, Washington and its surrounding area was the home of several breweries. Perhaps the leading one was that owned by a German immigrant to the US (in 1866), Christian Heurich, that was located where the Kennedy Center and the DC approach to Roosevelt Bridge is today. Dr. Mark Benbow, Assistant Professor of History at Marymount University and also Director of the Arlington County Museum, has now written the biography of Christian Heurich, [*Washington’s Capital Brewmaster: Christian Heurich and His Brewery*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarlane, 2017)], and on October 11 he made a presentation on Heurich and his brewery to members of the Society at Marymount University. Tracing Heurich’s life from his birth in the Thuringia region of central Germany, through his emigration to the United States, his early travels in America, and finally his decision to settle in Washington where, as a trained brewmaster in Germany, he decided to establish his business (in 1872). Through thorough historical research, Benbow related the story of his very successful business. With capital raised from his brewery, Heurich also became a significant landowner in the District, so that when prohibition was imposed he continued to live a comfortable life. With the lifting of prohibition in 1933, Heurich resumed his business, but Benbow noted, it did not thrive as it had before prohibition. His mansion at 1307 New Hampshire Ave. NW is today the Heurich House museum and is open to the public. Heurich and his descendants have also been active in DC civic life, and Benbow related some of that story too. Thanks to Mark Benbow for bringing to life this episode of our local history.

ADDENDA

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Editors Note

Editors Disclaimer: While we greatly appreciate the contributions of our many authors, views expressed in these articles are solely those of the designated author, and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the society, and/or the editor of this newsletter. ~Dakota Springston

AHS in Action:

A question that I am often asked is “what has the Historical Society done lately?” Sometimes people don’t realize that an Historic Society does more than just study the past, or have meetings. AHS is a active part of Arlington, and there is always something in the works. Currently, AHS is working on multiple projects, including conservation work on newly found relics, helping Arlington County Schools implement local history instruction in the classroom, re-cataloguing our collections so that they will be preserved for the future, along with numerous other projects. AHS is always looking for ways to engage with the community, and educate the public about history, and we need your help do to that. If you have an idea, let us know, or if you want to be a part of saving Arlington's history, we are always looking for volunteers and ideas! Together, we can not only save our history, we can make it!

AHS Blast from the Past

Each issue will try to feature a “AHS Blast from the Past” to complement what AHS is currently doing, and to show how AHS has been a positive force in Arlington County, and in local history.

Where do you think this picture is? Do you know when it was taken? Or who this is? If you know, or think you know, share with us!

Hint: This photograph wasn't taken in North Dakota, but the area shares a name with a Canadian city!



Hume School Happenings

There is always something happening at the AHS Museum at the Hume School, and right now there is the WWI exhibit put together by Dr. Mark Benbow. The exhibit includes World War I uniforms, photographs, and civilian items that help show Arlington’s experience during the “War to End All Wars.” The exhibit is part of a larger effort to mark and remember the centennial of the First World War, and honors the Arlingtonians who were a part of this “Great War.” Arlington’s WWI history is often eclipsed by WWII history, and by the large surge of growth in our County after the war. This is an interesting look at what Arlington was like one hundred years ago! Some items in the exhibit were provided from Mark Benbow’s personal collection. Stop by and see it soon!

The Arlington Historical Society Newsletter is published quarterly.

This is your newsletter, and we love hearing from you!

We welcome news items, photos, and articles for inclusion in the newsletter. Please submit copy to info@arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org or to the address below.

All submissions may be edited for length, grammar, spelling, etc.

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History Awaits. Come Visit!

Arlington Historical Museum

1805 South Arlington Ridge Road
Arlington, VA 22202

Hours: Wednesdays, Saturdays, and
Sundays 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 first Tuesday of each month at 7:00 P.M. in the Arlington Historical Museum at the Historic Hume School. Board meetings are open to the public.



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