



# Arlington Historical Society

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ARLINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
WINTER 2018

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## NEXT AHS PUBLIC PROGRAM

**“The History of the Potomac River”  
with  
Garrett Peck**

January 10, 2019  
Marymount University  
Reinsch Library  
Auditorium  
7:00 pm

## NEXT AHS BOARD MEETING

January 22, 2019 7pm  
1805 South Arlington Ridge  
Road, Arlington, VA 22202

*The AHS Board of Directors meets the fourth Tuesday of the month. AHS board meetings are open to all AHS members.*

## The President’s Dispatch

In October, the Arlington Historical Society had the great honor to host many of the athletes who participated in the desegregation of Arlington Public School sports. Hearing their stories brought back many great memories of my childhood as these men and women were my childhood heroes. During my childhood on Friday nights, my family could always be found at the local high school sports events, followed by a trip to Giffords after the games to celebrate or commiserate. Attendance at and participation in sporting events became a family tradition that continues to this day.

There were other Arlington traditions my family participated in, too. Each Thanksgiving, we would always find time to gather with friends and attend the Old Oaken Bucket game held between the schools of George Washington and Washington-Lee. At Christmas, we visited the “real Santa Claus” at Ayer’s Store in Westover and cheered when the Santa and reindeer display showed up on the top of the Preston Post Office. We headed down to D.C. each year to see the Christmas windows decorated at “Woodies”. In the spring, we crossed the river to see the cherry blossoms and in July we sought out the best spot in Arlington to see the fireworks in D.C. One distinct memory is when my father once parked right along Route 50 due to the traffic and plopped my brother and me on top of the car to view the fireworks.

These family traditions bring back fond memories and as I learned on a recent Facebook posting, many other Arlingtonians have the same memories as I do. One person even posted that we “must have grown up in the same house” due to the similarities in our memories. Today, we continue to have many opportunities to make more memories. As Arlington has grown and become more diverse, new traditions have made their way into the county. August is now associated with the Arlington County Fair and festivals such as The Taste of Arlington and The Peruvian Festival continue to attract fellow Arlingtonians who attend these events regularly.

While our great county has changed from the years of my childhood, it still provides opportunities for families to make great memories. As we begin a new year, we hope you and your family actively engage in all that Arlington has to offer. We also hope you will include in your schedule the many events that the Arlington Historical Society has to offer throughout the year as we passionately share the rich stories of Arlington’s past. Happy 2019 to all!

*Cathy Bonnevilles-Hix*

# PAST EVENTS

## AHS CONTRIBUTES TO WWI CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION

Several members of the AHS Board of Directors played a significant role and contributed extensively to the activities of the Arlington World War I Centennial Commemoration Task Force over the last 18 months. The culmination of these events took place on November 11, 2018, at the Clarendon American Legion War Memorial. The “Veterans Day/Armistice Day Commemoration 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the End of WW I” was attended by several hundred local citizens and dignitaries and was hosted by the Task Force, Arlington American Legion Posts, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Arlington County officials.

Part of the ceremony included the dedication of a new, historic interpretive panel that provides more detail about the roles played by Arlington citizens and the county during WWI. The text on this panel was a collaborative effort among the AHS, the Commemoration Task Force, The American Legion, and the County Historic Preservation Office. It will be permanently installed at the Clarendon Memorial.

The ceremony also included ringing a “Bell of Peace” 21 times, as part of a nationwide remembrance, and a three-volley rifle salute by the Arlington Police Rifle Team. (During WWI, a three volley firing was used as a signal to the combatants the field of battle had been cleared of the dead.) Period songs were performed by The Arlingtones and Opera Nova, including “Over There” and “It’s a Long Way to Tipperary.” Speakers included Task Force Chair Allison Finkelstein, American Legion Post 139 Commander Linden Dixon, and Arlington County Board Member Christian Dorsey. An open house and luncheon after the event was provided by the American Legion Post 139.

AHS Board Members who have served as members of the WWI Task Force include Cathy Bonneville Hix, Karl VanNewkirk, Tom Dickinson, and Mark Benbow.

## Fort Myer Revealed– AHS November Program



On November 8, Kim Bernard Holien, author of *The Battle of Balls Bluff*, led the audience through an exhilarating history of Arlington’s most famous fort, Fort Myer, formerly known as Fort Whipple. As the *ONLY* historian at Fort Myer, Mr. Holien regaled the audience with stories that revealed the “rest of the story” including fascinating links to John Wayne, the US Signal Corps, the Buffalo Soldiers, Alice Roosevelt, Truman’s White House, fort commander Colonel George Patton, and Jackie Kennedy. The audience learned of hidden Cold War era bunkers buried under gas stations, and many other fascinating tales.

## Directions to AHS Public Programs on the Marymount University Campus

Ever wonder if there was an easy way to get to AHS public programs at the Reinsch Library Auditorium on Marymount University’s Main Campus? There is! Go North on Glebe Road.

- Take a right onto N. 26 Street.
- After the intersection at Yorktown Road, take the next left into the entrance to campus.
- The Library will be to your left.
- For free parking, once inside the gate go left and drive past the library and park in the garage at the bottom of the incline. (Handicapped parking is on your right as you enter the campus gate.)





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

### **Person of the Issue: Dean Allard**

The Arlington Historic Society would like to dedicate this column to the legacy of Dean Allard who passed away this year. Dean was a leader of the small group of people who accepted the Ball-Sellers House from Marian Sellers in 1975. Dean was a naval historian and eventually became the Director of Naval History for the Department of Defense. He used his professional network of historian academics to conduct research on the house that justified its historic value and contributed to decisions on how to restore it. He helped lead the effort to refurbish the house so the public could visit it. It is safe to say that without Dr. Allard, the Ball-Sellers House might not exist. So for this legacy among other historical contributions to the larger US history, we honor Dr. Allard and his commitment to our local history.



### **Place of the Issue: the Airport**

One of our most important—and sometimes most aggravating—landmarks is our airport, known to some as “that airport,” or National, or Reagan National, or some by the erroneous title of “Hoover Airport!” In November of 1938, the first shovel fulls of ceremonial dirt were moved at the site of what is now National Airport. Between 1926 and 1938,

Congress produced reams of debate transcripts and 37 committee reports on the need for a new airport, but no action was taken. In the fall of 1938, President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced at a press conference that he was "tired of waiting for Congress" to select a site for the new airport and said that it would be built on mudflats on a bend of the Potomac River at Gravelly Point, 4 and a half miles south of Washington, D.C. Two months later, on November 21, 1938, the first ceremonial shovelful of dirt was moved to signal the start of construction. There are many historical quirks at the airport—parts of the Abingdon Plantation remain—and the FAA buildings held their own Cold War intrigue!



### **Artifact of the Issue: Apple Peeler**

This is a cast iron Reading 78 Apple Peeler dating back to the 1800s. When it was attached to a table, you could peel 10 apples per minute with just five turns per apple! Artifacts aren’t always glamorous or part of glorious or earth shattering events. Often the things we connect to best are things that played a part of ordinary life. Some may not recognize this kitchen implement, while others may fondly remember it!



# — THE VINE —

*The Wisteria vine that grows at the Ball Sellers House is a marvel of Arlington County. The Vine” in this newsletter covers activities at the Ball Sellers House.*

## **The 2018 Ball-Sellers House Season: It’s a Wrap! But it Was WET!**

*By Annette Benbow*

The 2018 season at the Ball-Sellers House is over. When we acquired the house from Marian Sellers in 1975, we opted to refurbish it to what it would have looked like when it was built and that means no electricity and no heat! So our season begins in April and ends in October when it’s not usually too cold. But weather—mostly heavy rain—got in the way quite a bit this year preventing us from doing some activities and even forcing us to close on several Saturday afternoons.

Even our opening day in April got postponed because of rain, as did our first try at the Wine and Wisteria Wine Tasting Event originally scheduled in May that eventually took place in June. But the real heartbreaker was the final event on October 27: a Haunted History Tour was cancelled after it rained for several days right up to preparation time.

But this season had some fabulous firsts. When we finally opened a week late, on the second Saturday of April, it was a beautiful sunny day and was perfect for our three re-enactors. Sandy Newton showed visitors how Elizabeth Ball and her five daughters would have spun wool into yarn and flax into thread. Dakota Springston represented John Ball showing guests how he would have made and used several tools. Scott Springston made it a trifecta of re-enactors by posing as a contemporary of John Ball’s from what would become Cherrydale, Andrew Donaldson whose grandson would plant the cherry trees that Cherrydale was named for. We had a good turnout for this belated opening!

Kevin Vincent hosted the annual George Washington’s Forest History Walk and had a record crowd. He always does such a great job telling the unique story of George Washington’s interest in land that would become Arlington and what it means today. *(continued on page 5)*

### **Looking Backwards**

**1918:** World War I was finally over and our boys would soon begin to come home.

**1818:** The Carlin family, the owners of what is now known as the Ball Sellers House, were beginning to appreciate the opening of the new Leesburg Turnpike.

**1718:** What is now Arlington consisted of a few large land grants from a succession of British kings—mostly to absentee owners. The current king, George I was preoccupied with war in Europe to pay much attention to the colonies.

**1618:** Arlington was home to Native Americans known as the Patowomeck who often provided white immigrants to Virginia with crucial assistance.

Do you love history?

Do you want to meet cool people?

Do you want to be around  
fascinating artifacts and  
amazing history?

**VOLUNTEER!**

Contact Volunteer Coordinator  
Robert White  
([robertwhite7@aol.com](mailto:robertwhite7@aol.com))



### **Ball-Sellers House (continued)**

We also got to help Glencarlyn celebrate on Glencarlyn Day with several volunteers walking in the parade dressed as colonial residents, and reenactors Scott and Dakota Springston again WOW-ing the crowd with their historically accurate outfits and accoutrements. The Ball-Sellers House got to be open for most of the day, despite the threat of rain.

Another first this year was the Wine and Wisteria Wine Tasting event. Our goal was to bring people to the Ball-Sellers House who probably wouldn't go there just for the history. And we succeeded! We sold out and about two thirds of the guests had never been to the house before. Bruce Schutte of Wine Pro Tours donated his time and expertise explaining the wine the guests were tasting and how it represented the history of wine making in Virginia. Rain held off long enough but a late deluge made clean up a big wet challenge!

August and September were drier and we had two marvelous history events. In early August, the Ball-Sellers House hosted a living history reenactment featuring military personnel from all the wars that each resident of the Ball-Sellers House participated in since the American Revolution. We had children doing military drills, the crowd trying on Civil War era clothing and posing for "photos," and everyone learning about World War I equipment.

In mid-September, the Ball-Sellers House participated in the Glencarlyn Community Garden's Autumn Fest. We had a "Guess the Herb" game, information about colonial uses of herbs, a paint your favorite flower, or plant seeds to take home. Again it was an opportunity to open the house to people who don't usually go there and partnering with our neighbors is a great way to do it! Campbell School kindergartners—all 60 of them—visited the house in the fall and learned what life was like for John and Elizabeth Ball and their five daughters from our docents.

Next year we hope to do even more and especially to do some of the events that we didn't get a chance to do like a Harvest Reenactment event and the Haunted History Tour! Whatever the weather, we are proud to represent the history of Arlington through this little wooden house built in the 1740s. See you for our 2019 opening day: April 6th.

**PLEASE SUPPORT OUR ADVERTISERS. THEY HELP MAKE THIS NEWSLETTER POSSIBLE.**

## **Still the #1 Remodeling Contractor in Arlington**

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## In Memoriam

The Ball-Sellers House honors the memory of Mary Niebuhr, a long-time docent who passed away this year. Mary was originally from Wisconsin and was a linguist, but she was drawn to history in her spare time and she earned a degree in historic preservation just because it was interesting. We knew her best as an enthusiastic docent who loved to tell visitors of all ages the story of the house. Mary, you will be missed.



## AHS Membership Categories, Dues, and Benefits

For the first time in several years, in April 2018 the Arlington Historical Society Board approved changes to the organization's membership categories, dues, and benefits, to simplify the membership structure. These changes are effective for the 2018-19 membership year starting July 1, 2018. The revised membership categories and dues are: Life – \$1000 (one-time), Business/Organization – \$350 (annually), Sponsor – \$100 (annually), Dual – \$50 (annually) and Individual – \$35 (annually).

### Benefits include:

- Helping preserve and promote Arlington history and build community in Arlington
- Invitations to members-only events
- Subscription to AHS newsletter
- Subscription to Arlington Historical Magazine
- 10% discount at Arlington Historical Museum shop
- 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 North American Reciprocal Museum (NARM) program (Sponsor and Life members)
- Recognition in annual banquet program (Business and Life members)
- Recognition in AHS newsletter and Social Media (Business members)

*Know someone who wants to join? Encourage them to visit our website.*

<https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/membership/>

## Blast from the Past

Early development of this Arlington site included a mixture of cheap motels, junkyards, and industry near the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad (the RF and P). By the 1960s, the proximity to Washington, D.C. and National Airport made it an ideal spot for the growth of commercial business. Soon, it will be the location of one of the largest corporations in the world.

*Photo Credit: GIS Arlington*



**SAVE THE DATE!**  
**Arlington Historical Society Annual Banquet**  
**Thursday, May 16, 2019**  
**Washington Golf and Country Club**

# ADDENDA

## AHS

**OFFICERS:**  
**PRESIDENT:**  
Cathy Hix

## VICE

**PRESIDENT  
AND  
VOLUNTEER  
COORDINATOR:**  
Robert White

**SECRETARY,  
AND COUNTY  
HALRB  
LIAISON:**  
Gerry Laporte

**TREASURER:**  
John H. Tuohy

## AHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Haley Anderson

George Axiotis

Mark Benbow  
*Museum Director*

Annette Benbow  
*Chair, Ball Sellers  
House Committee*

Tom Dickinson

Gerald Haines

Tracy Hopkins  
*Chair, Membership  
Committee*

Jessica Kaplan

Elise Milstein

Karl VanNewkirk

Dakota Springston  
*Newsletter Editor*

## Editors Note

*Editors Disclaimer: We greatly appreciate the contributions of our many authors, views expressed in these articles are those of the author and may 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 artifacts, increasing the digital collection available to the public on our website, helping Arlington County Schools implement local history instruction in the classroom, cataloguing our artifact collection so that each item is preserved for the future, to name just a few.

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!

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## A Recipe for Winter from His Excellency, George Washington

### Eggnogg

*“One quart cream, one quart milk, one dozen tablespoons sugar, one pint brandy, ½ pint rye whiskey, ½ pint Jamaica rum, ¼ pint sherry—mix liquor first, then separate yolks and whites of 12 eggs, add sugar to beaten yolks, mix well. Add milk and cream, slowly beating. Beat whites of eggs until stiff and fold slowly into mixture. Let set in cool place for several days. Taste frequently.”*

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## Holiday Museum Exhibit: Arlington Holiday Kitchens At the Arlington Historical Museum

Nothing says the holidays like food and nothing says food like the tools we use to fix it. Come and see this year's seasonal exhibit at the Arlington Historical Museum featuring kitchen items from Arlington homes through the years. You'll see implements from a time when residents of farmhouses had to be very self-sufficient and make everything they ate. We also have some unusual kitchen tools that may be difficult to identify, but are precursors to items we know today. All the artifacts have been donated to AHS by Arlingtonians and used in Arlington kitchens. The exhibit can be seen during normal museum hours now through the end of January.

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 [Dakota.springston@apsva.us](mailto:Dakota.springston@apsva.us) or to the address below.

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

Newsletter Editor, Arlington Historical Society

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**CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED**

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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)*

**T**he 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. Board meetings are open to the public.



**WWW.ARLINGTONHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG**

**FACEBOOK: 'ARLINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY'**

**703-942-9247**