



Arlington Historical Society

*The Quarterly Newsletter of the Arlington Historical Society
December 2019*

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President's Dispatch

In our region this fall many of us were thrilled with the ascendancy of the Washington Nationals who started the season with a miniscule chance of making it to post-season play, embraced the role of underdog, continued to fight and "finished the fight" with a World Series victory over the heavily favored Astros. What made this win so remarkable was that baseball in D.C. had not had a winning season since the Washington Senators victory in 1924, almost one hundred years ago.

Our World Series win in 1924 was not the only remarkable event in this area in the early 1920s. The one that is important to us is that in 1920, Arlington received its official name. Since the 1846 the area that is now Arlington had been the rural parts of Alexandria County, Virginia. Eventually, confusion between Alexandria County and Alexandria City led to the General Assembly legislating the name change to Arlington in March of that year.

Arlington looked a lot different than it does now. With an estimated population of about 16,000, it still included farmsteads but was just beginning its shift to neighborhoods and small villages within the county such as Clarendon, the center of Arlington at the time. The county was beginning to realize the need for countywide water and sewage systems. Electric railway lines existed to carry people through Arlington, but they were being replaced by automobiles; thus increasing the need to change dirt roads to paved ones. To "take a stroll" through Arlington and see what it looked like in 1920s, an interactive StoryMap can be viewed at arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org. The StoryMap, created by AHS member and noted Arlington columnist Charlie Clark provides an up-close glimpse of the county of the past.

This year, we plan to honor the 100th anniversary of the naming of Arlington with a series of programs and events. Our goal is to look at the progress we have made in Arlington over the century and the challenges we will address into the next hundred years. Programs and events will be sent to you via our monthly email blast and on our website arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org. We hope you will join us in our journey through our 100-year history.

Cathy Bonawille Stix

Arlington Historical Museum

1805 South Arlington
Ridge Road

Open Free: Friday,
Saturday, and Sunday
1:00-4:00 pm

Holiday Exhibit:

Local Business Giveaways

We welcome group tours
of any size by
appointment.

Ball-Sellers House

5620 3rd Street, South
Closed for the Season
Opening: April 4, 2020

AHS Board Meeting

January 20, 2020, 7:00 pm
1805 South Arlington
Ridge Road
AHS Members Welcome

Upcoming AHS Events

More information about other upcoming events is available at the AHS website:

<https://www.arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org>

Thursday, January 9, 2020

StoryMap: Arlington of 1920: Interactive and Online.

Local columnist and history enthusiast Charlie Clark demonstrates the first-ever interactive “Story Map” showcasing photos of how Arlington looked in 1920, showing homes, schools, churches, government buildings, stores and transportation infrastructure that would have been encountered by an Arlingtonian traveling local streets in 1920. (*Reinsch Library, Marymount University, Glebe Rd., 7 pm*)



Sunday, January 12, 2020

AHS Members Winter Social

Join your friends and fellow history buffs for light hors d'oeuvres and libations, a chance to talk about all things Arlington history, and get a look at the museum's exhibits. It's free and open to the public. We hope to see you there. (*Arlington Historical Museum, 1805 South Arlington Ridge Rd., 4-6 pm*)



Thursday, February 13, 2020

Arlington Women Who Fought for the Vote.

Nancy Tate, the past national President of the League of Women Voters will recount what it took for women to be able to vote and the role of Arlington women in that fight. (*Reinsch Library, Marymount University, Glebe Rd., 7 pm*)



Thursday, March 12, 2020

Life in Arlington in the 1920s

Local historian Peter Penczer takes us on a photographic journey through Arlington in the 1920s. See rural Alexandria County get a new name and evolve from a farming community into a rapidly growing suburb. Find out where Arlingtonians went to have fun: Arlington Beach, Washington Airport, and Ballston Field in the age of trolleys, bungalows, and the Klan. (*Reinsch Library, Marymount University, Glebe Rd., 7 pm*)



The Bottom: An African American Enclaved Rediscovered

On November 14, Jessica Kaplan, archivist and AHS Board Member spoke about “The Bottom” the completely vanished site of one of Arlington’s earliest African American communities. Located along Pimmit Run near Chain Bridge it lasted a hundred years from before the Civil War until the construction of the Northern portion of the George Washington Parkway in the 1950s.

The community was brought to life by skillful use of old newspapers, Civil War soldiers’ drawings, and Southern Claims Commission documents. We learned of early land sales and how an unpromising location offered sanctuary to a small group of African American families. Maps and census records told of properties and individuals. Through knowledge of similar communities, we could imagine residents’ homes, their crops and livestock, and jobs and interactions with other white and black communities.

Ms. Kaplan also told the not flattering picture of racist Union Soldiers and Jim Crow Arlington (including a Ballston KKK Chapter). In the end, prejudice, suburbanization, and land speculation (and the George Washington Parkway) was The Bottom’s demise. All are grateful to Jessica Kaplan for her impressive research and bringing back to life this early and resilient African American community. (*Sean Denniston*)

Three Sisters

This column showcases three historical things that make Arlington so unique. The Three Sisters are a person, a place, and an artifact from the AHS collection.

The Person: Gertrude Crocker



Gertrude Crocker was a suffragist who advocated for women's voting rights. She joined the National Women's Party (NWP) and came to D.C. from Chicago to work for the federal government. In 1916, she became treasurer of the NWP. Like many other women, Crocker picketed the White House and marched in protests and

parades. She was jailed three times with other suffragists was sent to the Occoquan Workhouse where she and other suffragists were mistreated and abused. Her letters to her mother while imprisoned were

published in the Chicago Tribune and drew attention to the suffragists' abusive treatment. Finally, in 1920 the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified and women were granted the right to vote.

Crocker moved to Arlington where she married and adopted a daughter. She owned the Little Tea House which was on South Arlington Ridge Road overlooking D.C. It became the "go to" dining spot for Washington's elite and celebrities of the day. In 1945, she again represented the National Women's Party in a national forum when she addressed the US House of Representatives subcommittee on the Equal Rights Amendment. This adopted Arlingtonian will be honored along with her sisters at the future national memorial to American suffragists near the site of their imprisonment at Occoquan. *(Ciro Taddeo)*

The Place: Arlington County: A 1920s Perspective



Arlington County didn't become a cosmopolitan community overnight because it changed its name. The smallest county in the nation was a much different place by 1920 and it was on the move. The turn of the 20th century saw the then

rural county just north of Alexandria City lurch from an agrarian area with disbursed small communities to a modern and planned society.

new utilities, decent roads, and modern schools, drawing up plans late that year for what would become the large, centrally located Washington-Lee High School. The county had emerged from World War I with planned communities, most prominent were Lyon Village and Buckingham. Land developers built new neighborhoods, improving roads and utilities. Newspapers reported that in February 1920 Alexandria Delegate Charles Jess introduce a bill to rename the county and eliminate the confusion between Alexandria City and County. Yet it became clear that the change did more to free this county to reach its new heights. *(George Axiotis)*

Throughout the early 1900s, the county had established a central courthouse in the Fort Myer area, small formal public schools along the main corridors, and electric trolley service from Georgetown through Rosslyn, traversing the County to what is now Ballston and McLean. It was also cleaning up its image concluding a 25-year campaign against illegal gambling and vice in Rosslyn and Jackson City near the 14th Street Bridge by dismantling the Heath, Fontane, and Nelson cartels.

By 1920, the county was seen as a good place to live and raise a family with a 50% growth in its population since 1910. The county's 16,000 residents demanded

The Artifact: Wooden Nickel



T.1 This wooden nickel was given to customers by Buckingham Community TV which was located at 311 N. Glebe Road in the Buckingham Shopping Center, at what is now Ace Cash Express. We don't know much about this

business. Can you tell us more? This is one of the many "giveaways" from Arlington businesses of yesteryear featured in the holiday exhibit at the Arlington Historical Museum. *(Mark Benbow)*

Ball-Sellers House News

After a successful season, fall at the Ball-Sellers House (BSH) has been a time to preserve and maintain this historical treasure. This is the less glamorous part of a house museum but is just as important as the many fun ways we invite people to enjoy the history of the house.

One of the reasons we can say we had such a successful season is that at one of our garden events Alexis Steen, an AHS member, volunteered to be the BSH gardener. She has donated her green thumbs and plant knowledge to weed and re-edge all the garden areas, trim, and mulch everywhere. She has also come up with a calendar of garden maintenance activities for us to use in the future and is advising us on prioritizing next projects to maintain and beautify the property. The gardens, even in the fall, look much tidier and we are grateful she has found us and is volunteering her time, energy, and expertise.

We also reinsulated under the crawl space under the two-story section built in the 1880s. and completed maintenance on the roof of the 1880s section to prevent leaks. Several tiles were missing after the wind and rain we experienced earlier this year; and we resealed around the vents, chimney, and between the house and the porch roof. JGL Roofing earned the contract on this work.

We're already looking forward to April 4, 2020 when we reopen for our 2020 season! If you are interested in becoming a docent, please email us at info@arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org and we could start your training during the off-season.

Arlington Historical Museum Holiday

Exhibit: Gimmes, Giveaways, and Premiums

The Arlington Historical Museum has a new exhibit for the holidays featuring the “gimmes” and giveaways offered by Arlington businesses to encourage customers to spend with them. In the decades after World War II, these giveaways were in their heyday. Suburbanization had begun around D.C. before World War I, rapidly accelerated in the 1920s, and began anew in 1946. As people moved into their new suburban homes, local businesses rushed to begin building customer loyalty with the newcomers. Handy small household items, attractive and interesting knick-knacks, and even small toys were all intended to keep the business's name in front of the consumer.

New homeowners often wanted to personalize their homes, so DIY (do it yourself) grew in popularity, as did increasing demand for skill repairmen, such as plumbers. Home entertaining was popular as well, as people wanted to show off their new homes and to build community with their new neighbors. Struggling to throw a party at home became a cliché in the era. Many of the television and radio comedies of the era had episodes where the wife fought multiple disasters as their husband was bringing his boss home for dinner. Many of the artifacts on exhibit demonstrate these trends: DIY and entertaining guests.

The exhibit runs through January. Visit the museum Friday, Saturday, or Sunday free 1-4 pm.

AHS Welcomes New Director to Board

At the November meeting, the AHS Board unanimously voted to seat Delegate Patrick Hope to the AHS Board, filling the seat vacated by Haley Anderson in May. An Arlington resident, Delegate Hope has been involved in numerous community activities and was the founding president of the Buckingham Community Civic Association. A local health care attorney, Hope serves as the delegate to the Virginia General Assembly from the 47th District. Delegate Hope is also active in numerous Arlington organizations and has been a member of the Arlington Historical Society since 2015. In accepting the Board position, Delegate Hope stated “As a 20 year resident of Arlington, I find myself wanting to learn more about our past and that has inspired me to become more active in preserving our history.” The AHS Board welcomes Delegate Hope and looks forward to his expertise in the upcoming year.

We deeply appreciate the support of the following local businesses and organizations.

Aurora Hills Women's Club	BCN Homes	Clark Lithograph
EagleBank Foundation	E. G. Reinsch Companies	Glass Distributors, Inc.
John Marshall Bank	National Capital Bank	Wells Fargo Bank

In Memoriam: Donald J. Orth

Don Orth passed away on October 30, 2019 at the age of 94. Don was a stalwart member of the Arlington Historical Society for many years. He served as President of the organization from 1974 to 1975. He also served as the director of the Arlington Historical Museum. Don was President in 1975 when AHS accepted Marion Sellers' donation of the Ball-Sellers House, as illustrated in this photo in *The Washington Post*. Don was one of the dedicated volunteers who renovated the property and transformed it into the historic house museum still maintained by AHS. After Don's memorial service on November 16, his oldest grandson recalled Don taking him as a boy to the Ball-Sellers house to "help" with the renovation. After that preservation effort, Don and his wife, Martha "Marty," purchased Linden Farm on the Northern Neck of Virginia, which dates to about 1750. They worked on the restoration of Linden for 26 years.



February 25, 1975, AHS President Don Orth (right) received the key from Marion Sellers (left) to what would become the Ball-Sellers House. (Photo courtesy Washington Post)

As a member of the U.S. Navy, Don participated in the landing on Omaha Beach on D-Day. He had a distinguished career as a geographer with the U.S. Department of the Interior. He is survived by his wife, Marty, who succeeded Don as President of AHS in 1977 and 1978 and was for many years the chairperson of AHS's Ball-Sellers House Committee. Don is also survived by five children, five grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren and 17 great-great grandchildren.



Volunteer Your Time and Talents Help Your Community by Helping AHS Promote and Preserve History

AHS is fueled by volunteer energy and has opportunities for everyone who has an interest in history or who wants to be more involved in their community.

Top Three AHS Volunteer Needs

1. **Gift shop buyer:** Do you like to shop? Especially for books? We'll show you how to keep the gift shop at the Arlington Historical Museum well-stocked with local history books and other ideas you might have for local history mementos. Almost all can be done at home on your own devices.
2. **Docent coordinator** for the Arlington Historical Museum. You'll schedule docents and send reminders. All done at home via email. We'll show you tips and tools to keep our museum volunteers on schedule.
3. **Docent** at the Arlington Historical Museum. It's fun, it's history, and you'll meet and talk with other history fans. Training provided.
email: info@arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org

AHS Stewardship of Your Money

AHS depends on donations and membership fees to enable us to carry out our mission. The generosity of our members has allowed us to continue our work in the community. AHS receives no operational funding from the county, so we depend on your donations 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. This fall your donations supported the following:

- AHS concluded its financial support for the launching of the StoryMap. This interactive tool on our website arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org allows viewers to see what Arlington looked like in 1920 when it received its official name.
- AHS published the annual addition of the Arlington Historical Magazine which includes a variety of research articles about Arlington history. Members get this unique magazine free.
- The Ball-Sellers House required extensive work under the house to make the building termite free and better insulated. In addition, leakage into the house during fall rainstorms required roof work to prevent future water damage.

AHS in the Community December 2019

AHS owns and operates two museums- The Arlington Historical Museum at Hume School which is open Friday-Sunday afternoons throughout the year. The Ball Sellers house museum is open Saturday from April through 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:

- AHS Board Members continued their work in the county with Cathy Hix on the Arlington 2020 Committee, Jessica Kaplan on the Changing the Narrative Committee, Gerry Laporte on the HARLB, and John Tuohy representing AHS with the Civic Federation.
- In September, AHS President Cathy Hix was presented with the Community Builder Award by the Cherrydale-Columbia Consolidated Masonic Lodge for her work on behalf of the county.
- In October and November, Ball-Sellers docents provided tours through Ball-Sellers for 60 kindergarteners from the local school. Our two museums provide the perfect location for student visits as the state curriculum focuses on community for kindergarteners.
- On October 9 Karl VanNewkirk spoke at Aurora Hills Senior Center about the founding of the Arlington Historical Society and the establishment of the Arlington Historical Museum.
- AHS Board member Karl VanNewkirk taught an Encore Learning class on Arlington History during the months of October and November. Each session was held in a different location around the county; two in AHS museums, one in the Black Heritage Museum, four in County facilities, and one in historic Calloway Church.
- In November, Cathy Hix did a presentation on preparing museum exhibits for a group of 4th graders at Campbell Elementary.
- In December, AHS docents worked with a local Brownie troop who visited the Arlington Historical Museum to work on their “Celebrating Community” badge.
- Tom Dickinson displayed his exhibit Windows to the Past at Shirlington Library which provides viewers a perspective on how original homes in Arlington have been replaced in recent years.



**Did you receive the AHS “Bell-Ringer” letter?
Your donation is so important to AHS and to Arlington
history.**



New AHS Volunteer Intake Program and Docent Training

This fall, AHS began a new volunteer intake program. When we learn of a volunteer's interest in donating their time and energy to the Society, we contact you to set up a mutually convenient time to meet in person—usually at the Arlington Historical Museum. We'll learn from you what you like to do and suggest some ways your likes fit AHS needs.

If you want to become a docent at the Arlington Historical Museum—a big favorite—we wait until we have several new docents and then Lois Chadbourne, a long-time volunteer docent, swings into action and schedules a new docent training class. She goes over the docent manual, answers questions, and shows new docents the ins and outs of the building. Past AHS-President and long-time docent, Karl VanNewkirk provides an in-depth historical tour of the building and a guided narrated tour of all the exhibits. Lois also offers a refresher for docents who have been doing it for a while.

For other volunteer activities, AHS will pair you with an experienced person who can help you get started. Whether you want to be a museum docent, want to be our book buyer for the museum gift shop, coordinate AHS docents, or work on AHS's social media platforms, we have a fun way for you to volunteer that can help build our community by promoting Arlington history.

New Docents

New docents decide which days they want: Friday, Saturday, or Sunday from 1-4 pm and how often they would like to be at the museum. Being a docent is not difficult. AHS pairs you with a more experienced docent. It is fun and rewarding. Docents meet all kinds of visitors interested in Arlington history, some are just walking by, some have been planning to stop in for a long time. Some have questions and some just want to take the self-guided tour and absorb as much as they can.

War Memorial Interpretive Panels Unveiled on Veterans Day

Aided by many Arlington individuals and organizations, Arlington commemorated Veteran's Day 2019 in a special way, by unveiling new historical markers at the Clarendon War Memorial. The Veteran's Day/Armistice Day Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the End of World War I was held at 11:00 on November 11, 2019, 100 years to the minute of the end of World War I. This event hosted by the Arlington chapters of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars was the culmination of a multi-year community effort.

The event unveiled the names of five additional Arlington military men killed in World War I and an interpretive panel explained the history of the war memorial. Additional panels highlighted military conflicts since then in which Arlingtonians died. Speakers Christian Dorsey (County Board) and Allison Finkelstein (WWI Commemoration Task Force Chair) spoke of the sacrifice of so many and the determination of an entire community to honor all of them. The Veteran's Day event was also the culmination of a series of events hosted by the Arlington Historical Society and several other local organizations that marked the end of World War I.



Foreground: One side of the new interpretive signs at the Clarendon War Memorial (background). (Photo courtesy Tracy Hopkins)



P.O. Box 100402
Arlington, Virginia 22210

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History Awaits Come Visit!

Arlington Historical Museum

1805 South Arlington Ridge Road
Arlington, VA 22202

Hours: Friday-Saturday-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)