

Arlington Historical Society

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Arlington Historical Society
March 2020

President's Dispatch

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When I was growing up in Arlington, my family depended on local businesses to meet our needs. The Seven Corners shopping center was relatively new and Tyson's Corner would not open until the late 1960s. So, we looked for businesses along either Wilson or Washington Boulevards. Westover Village was our closest shopping area. We bought gas at the Westover Service Center on the corner. Westover Florist is where we went for flowers and the bakery is where we stopped in for treats and where I bought my wedding cake. My favorite store as a child was Ayers Variety and Hardware where you could find a myriad of items and the owner, Mr. Ayers always had candy in his pocket for the local kids. When I was older, I would ride a bus down to Clarendon to shop at Lerner's or head to Kann's and Mary Baynes gift shop where I bought many Christmas presents.

In talking with other Arlingtonians, I know that many of you have similar memories of great businesses in other Arlington neighborhoods. How many of you bought your first car at Bob Peck Chevrolet? Did any of you head to Giffords for ice cream after a football game? Did you spend summer nights playing some Putt Putt Golf in the heart of Ballston? Did you take your clothes to Bergmann's Cleaners? How about dinner at Tops or Orleans House? Fond memories for businesses that have disappeared from the Arlington community, but are not forgotten.

Many of you may not be aware, but Arlington is also the place where some very famous businesses got their start. The fast food franchise Five Guys opened its first store in 1986 in the Westmont Shopping Center in South Arlington. The International Marriott Corporation started local in Arlington, with the Twin Bridges Motor Hotel in 1957 and Key Bridge Marriott in 1959.

Today, Arlington is thriving with businesses, many who have been here for decades. A few examples include B.M. Smith (1908), Columbia Gardens Cemetery (1917), American Service Center (1937), Ayers Variety and Hardware (1947), and Mario's Pizza (1957). Some of these businesses even pre-date the naming of Arlington in 1920. As we celebrate the 100th year of the naming of our county, we plan to highlight the role that businesses have played in its development through our upcoming banquet and museum exhibits. Check out arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org for more information about these upcoming events and programs. We would love to hear about your favorite Arlington business.

Arlington Historical Museum

1805 South Arlington Ridge Road
Closed until the corona virus threat has passed.

Ball-Sellers House

5620 3rd Street, South
Closed until the corona virus threat has passed.

AHS Board Meeting

The next meeting on March 24, 2020 will be conducted virtually.
1805 South Arlington Ridge Road



Upcoming AHS Events

Like the rest of the country, the Arlington Historical Society has cancelled several events to help limit the potential spread of the coronavirus. We are adhering to county guidelines and we are using Arlington Public School closure as our guide for upcoming events.

We will keep our website updated about further cancellations should they occur.

<https://www.arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org>

POSTPONED AND WILL BE RESCHEDULED

~~April 4, 2020~~ Ball-Sellers House Opening Day

~~April 9, 2020~~ Shootout in Jackson City

George Axiotis will discuss the true story behind his book about an eager Deputy Sheriff who, in 1896, went to do the right thing but got into the largest shootout in county history. The raid ended in a hail of gunfire and spurred a long war against vice in the county.

ON SCHEDULE AS THIS NEWSLETTER GOES TO PRINT

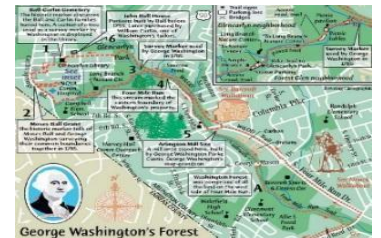
May 14, 2020 Annual AHS Banquet

The annual AHS banquet will commemorate the last 100 years as Arlington County with NBC4 News Anchor and Arlington native Doreen Gentzler. We will also be honoring Frank O'Leary with the Cornelia B. Rose Lifetime Achievement Award and Charlie Clark as the AHS Volunteer of the Year. Great food and even a local jazz band make this the event of the year! Tickets available on Eventbrite or watch your email or mailbox. (Washington Golf and Country Club, 6:00 pm)



May 23, 2020 George Washington's Forest History Walk

In 1775, Washington bought 1200-acres in what is now Arlington and after the Revolutionary War, he returned to survey his property. Walk in Washington's footsteps and see his survey markers, a DC boundary stone, the site of a mill built by his step-grandson, and much more. (Starts at the Ball-Sellers House 5620 3rd St., South in Glencarlyn 1:30 pm. Free but donations appreciated)



June 11, 2020 The Ground Observation Corps in Arlington

During the Cold War, Arlington knew it was "ground zero" and no one prepared for it better than those who watched the skies to provide early warning for our community and the nation. (Reinsch Library Auditorium, Marymount University Main Campus, Glebe Road, Free. 7 pm)



July 9, 2020 Prohibition in Arlington

Historian Mark Benbow will talk about how our county dealt with Prohibition. Being at the doorstep of the nation's capital with no legal alcohol had its challenges. Find out how Arlingtonians evaded or enforced the law from rum runners to backyard stills. (Reinsch Library Auditorium, Marymount University Main Campus, Glebe Road. Free. 7 pm)



Watch for updates and any event schedule changes at our website <https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org>

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ArlingtonHistoricalSociety/>



On Twitter: #ArlingtonHistory



Update from the Arlington Historical Society Museum

Following guidance from the county and the US Center for Disease Control, we have decided to close the Arlington Historical Museum to prevent the spread of the corona virus. AHS will keep you and the public updated on when we will reopen, but in the meantime, AHS is following what Arlington Public Schools are doing.

Nevertheless, the Museum Director continues to refresh existing exhibits and to add new ones. When the museum reopens, visitors will be able to view the beautiful new model of the historic Mary Carlin Home donated by Judy Titus made by her husband of their home. This is a miniature model that opens up to show the home inside. Mary Carlin was the granddaughter of William Carlin, a tailor and early resident of what is now the Ball-Sellers House. He built this home for his son. His granddaughter, Mary, a teacher, continued to live there until her death in 1905. Carlin is the name sake of Glencarlyn and Carlin Springs.

Virtual visitors can see the museum's temporary exhibit "The 1920s in 12 (or so) Objects" on our website with photos and complete descriptions of the artifacts and what they mean to the history of Arlington. When the museum reopens, we will host an exhibit about local businesses that have become part of our community.



Ball-Sellers House: Ready for Whenever Our 2020 Season Begins

The Ball-Sellers House may have been closed for the season since November but we've had a lot of activity there and all of it geared toward preserving this historic treasure and enhancing the visitor experience.

In the fall, we had maintenance done on the roof. A little leak can be a big deal and, in this case, a little maintenance prevented it from becoming one. We hired JGL Roofing who repaired and sealed the apron flashing on the front of the 1880s section where the clapboard meets the porch roof. They also repaired damaged shingles and replaced missing ones and they replaced and re-caulked the chimney flashing and roof vents. We had the roof replaced about 15 years ago so we are glad maintenance will extend the life of the roof and the house!

Our volunteer gardener, Alexis Steen, has been applying some tender loving care to the greenery at the Ball-Sellers House. She edged all our gardens, worked with a landscape company to spread about a truck and half full of county-supplied mulch on all the gardens, and discovered that, despite some yellowing, the 100-year old boxwood does NOT have blight. In addition, she has mapped out a long-term plan for keeping everything growing—outside of the AFAC vegetable garden—and looking great.

Historic houses have a need for constant attention and finding just the right person to keep working at those small tasks is important. Fortunately, the Ball-Sellers House has found professional handyman Dan Huber who not only loves the historic home, but also likes and wants to do small jobs. He painted and replaced two window shutters on the 1880s section and is working on small carpentry tasks to make sure the shed in the back—used as a combination outhouse until public water came in the 1930s and chicken coop—can weather the weather. Our live-in caretaker, Margaret Wagner, keeps an eye open for all those little things that a 270-year old house needs.

All this attention creates a great experience for visitors again this year. Even though our opening day has been postponed, we will reopen and when we do, we'll be ready to help visitors travel back in time.

Local History Videos Available on AHS Website

AHS recently added dozens of videos about local history to its video webpage.

You can search the videos by using the search bar at the top right of the page:

<https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/category/video/>



Three Sisters: Person, Place, and Artifact

To help commemorate 1920 as the year Arlington acquired its name, in this newsletter, we are highlighting some of the items we have on display at the Arlington Historical Museum in our new temporary exhibit on life in the 1920s. Our three sisters are a person, a place, and an artifact.

Person: Dr. Peyton M. Chichester



Dr. Peyton M. Chichester, a doctor living in Clarendon with his wife and two children, became Arlington County's second Health Department officer in 1924. His name was often on building quarantine notices in the county when diseases like typhoid and scarlet fever were found in homes or businesses.

Dr. Chichester led county efforts to improve the health and safety of the county's water supply and he launched a school vaccination program to help prevent the spread of communicable diseases like scarlet fever and typhoid. Inspired by the death of child that he could not save because the parents brought the child to him too late to help, he became a lifelong advocate for helping children start their lives healthy so they could live longer healthier lives.

Dr. Chichester worked for the Arlington County health department until 1937, then he went to work for the Virginia State Health Department in Richmond. He died in 1961 in Richmond after more than 30 years of public service. The exhibit shows one of the actual building quarantine signs for scarlet fever signed by him. *(The sign was a gift of Charles J. A. Johnson, Jr.)*

Place: 614 South 23rd Street "Kit Home"

In 1923, Walter Bixler hired a company to assemble his brand new "kit home" here. Arlington was in the middle of a growth spurt after World War I and several mail order companies like Montgomery Ward and Sears, Roebuck offered catalog "kit houses" that were sold through the mail. Almost everything needed to assemble the house was then shipped to the site. Bixler bought a model we have identified as "The Westly." The house still stands today and looks much like the original plans. The exhibit shows the 1923 contract signed by Walter Bixler with a company named Gaither & Hollway that assembled this house.



Artifact: West Electric Hair Curlers

This new gadget was a metal hair curler that opened like a safety pin. It was patented in the 1920s and initially marketed to women with long hair. But in the 1920s, ads were aimed increasingly at women who wore their hair in the new style: "bobbed" or short hair.

When the Arlington Historical Museum reopens after the corona virus emergency has passed, we will be open on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. Visit the museum then!



Arlington at 100



Arlington continues its year-long celebration of the naming of our county in 1920. AHS is proud to be serving on the county committee helping to coordinate activities. Many more events are planned for the rest of the year to celebrate the Arlington Naming Centennial, including the rescheduled events we have had to cancel due to the corona virus threat.

Up-to-date details can be found on our AHS website:

<https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org> or on the Arlington County website at arlingtonva.us/eb. We hope you will be able to join us at future events celebrating our county after the corona virus threat has passed. Some of the highlights before the shutdown have been the following:

January:

- ❖ A presentation by author and historian Charlie Clark on his StoryMap developed for AHS depicting what Arlington looked like in the 1920s.
- ❖ A viewing and discussion of the WETA documentary of Arlington during World War II: “Heroes, History and Hamburgers” was held. This video shared the history of Arlington with insight from local historians.

February:

- ❖ The presentation “Women Winning the Vote: The Virginia Story” by Nancy Tate which focused on the 100th anniversary of Women’s Suffrage and the role that Virginia and Arlington played in that fight.
- ❖ A panel discussion on the African American Experience in Arlington County featuring noted Arlington leaders.

March:

- ❖ The introduction of a recreated craft brew “Arlington 100” at the New District Brewing Company. The beer is based on an old recipe that was brewed in Arlington in the early 1900s.
- ❖ To Be Rescheduled: A birthday event for Arlington on the 100th anniversary of our naming with a proclamation by Delegate Patrick Hope and birthday cake for all the guests.
- ❖ To Be Rescheduled: A presentation on “Life in Arlington in the 1920s” featuring rare photos of life in our rural county as it began to evolve into a growing suburb with local historian Peter Penczer.

Arlington Historical Society Annual Banquet
Currently Scheduled but Subject to Change: Thursday, May 14, 2020
Washington Golf and Country Club

We hope you will join us at this year’s banquet as we partner with the Arlington at 100 Committee to celebrate our county over the last 100 years. Highlights of the event include:

- ❖ Our guest speaker Doreen Gentzler, WRC-TV News anchor and Arlington native
- ❖ A silent auction of Arlington services and products
- ❖ A salute to Arlington businesses
- ❖ The honoring of Charlie Clark as the AHS Volunteer of the Year
- ❖ The honoring of Frank O’Leary as the Cornelia B. Rose, Jr. recipient for his work on behalf of Arlington’s history.

Tickets will be available for purchase on Eventbrite. Watch for more details and updates.



Feel the Heritage

On February 29, Jessica Kaplan, Mark Benbow, and Sean Denniston of AHS staffed a table in the Hall of History at the annual Feel the Heritage Festival at Drew Elementary School. The event focused on Arlington's African American history so AHS brought editions of the *Arlington Historical Magazine*, books, photographs, and maps from our collection that highlight black Arlington.



The centerpiece of our booth was a small exhibit on The Bottom, a free black enclave by Chain Bridge started before the Civil War. Most visitors had never heard of community and were pleased to learn of its existence and how it was rediscovered. Several had hiked through the remains of The Bottom on Pimmit Run Trail and felt an historical marker there would be beneficial.

In addition, Jessica, Mark, and Sean promoted the two AHS museums, monthly public programs, and other forms of outreach into the Arlington community. It was a great day.

Notice to Members of Annual Meeting

The Arlington Historical Society will hold its annual meeting of members on Thursday, June 11, 2020, at 7:00 pm, at the Reinsch Library Auditorium, Marymount University, 2807 N. Glebe Rd., Arlington, Va. Ordinarily, AHS holds its annual meeting in May, but the AHS board of directors moved the date for this year only.

The business portion of the meeting, where new officers and other directors will be elected, is expected to be short. It will be followed by a public lecture entitled "The Ground Observation Corps in Arlington." For directions and further information, check out AHS's website at <https://ArlingtonHistoricalSociety.org>.

The Nominating Committee intends to nominate the following for election as directors at the meeting: Cathy Hix for president, Robert White for vice-president, Sean Denniston for secretary, John Tuohy for treasurer, and George Axiotis, Annette Benbow, Tom Dickinson, Gerry Haines, Patrick Hope, Tracy Hopkins, Jessica Kaplan, Lara McCauley, Annette Marrero-Olivera, David Pearson, and Karl VanNewkirk as directors at large.

In the event that we are unable to hold an in-person meeting in June, we will conduct the annual meeting electronically with details emailed to members in advance.

Gerry Laporte, Secretary

Arlington
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AHS in the Community December 2019-March 2020

AHS operates two local history museums, the Arlington Historical Museum at Hume School which is open Friday-Sunday afternoons throughout the year and the Ball Sellers house museum is open from April to October.

These museums are staffed by a terrific group of volunteer docents, including six new ones since January 2020! 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 member Jessica Kaplan did a presentation to the Northern Virginia Chapter, Archaeology Society of Virginia. Her topic was about The Bottom, an African American community in Arlington that disappeared over the years.
- ❖ AHS Board members Sean Denniston, Jessica Kaplan, and Mark Benbow exhibited artifacts from the AHS museum at the Arlington County Feel the Heritage Festival at Drew Community Center.
- ❖ AHS President Cathy Hix presented on the topic of Women Fighting for a Better Community at the Aurora Hills Community Center.
- ❖ AHS President Cathy Hix worked with Arlington Public Schools to develop the script for a series of videos highlighting historical events in the past 100 years of Arlington history
- ❖ AHS Board member Tom Dickenson represented AHS at the recent Civil War Trails regional meeting.
- ❖ AHS Board member John Tuohy and AHS Magazine Editor Max Gross served as judges for a history day competition for a local elementary school.

Stewardship of Your Money

The AHS depends on donations and membership fees to allow us to carry out our mission. The generosity of our members has allowed us to continue our work in the community. This summer your donations supported the following:

- ❖ AHS developed several new exhibits for the Arlington Historical Museum focusing on the 1920s and technology through the ages.
- ❖ AHS provided a member social event to introduce members to new exhibits and a recently donated model of the Mary Carlin House.
- ❖ AHS updated its credit card machine and purchased a mobile credit card hardware to use at county events.

AHS does not receive 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.

Business Members

We are thrilled to have the support of the following local businesses:

BCN Homes	E.G. Reinsch Companies	Clark Lithograph
Glass Distributors	EagleBank Foundation	John Marshall Bank
National Capital Bank	Wells Fargo Bank	



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History Awaits

Arlington Historical Museum

1805 South Arlington Ridge Road
Arlington, VA 22202

Temporarily closed during the corona
virus emergency.

Ball-Sellers House Museum

5620 Third Street South
Arlington, VA 22204

Temporarily closed during the corona
virus emergency.

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

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