

# ARLINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY YEAR IN REVIEW

## 2020–2021

This report highlights Arlington History Society (AHS) activities during our fiscal year June 30, 2020, to July 1, 2021. This past year has been unlike any other since our founding in 1956.

As our year started, Arlington was still very much in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Public celebrations such as for the hundredth anniversary of the naming of Arlington County were on indefinite hold. Despite this dispiriting situation, AHS was able to offer a yearlong series of virtual programming, proving popular with our members and the public. We are grateful to both for their continued support. We also extend a special thanks to our speakers for accommodating the change from in person to virtual events.

### Arlington Historical Museum

The Arlington Historical Museum at the Hume School was closed to the public from April 2020 through June 2021. AHS implemented measures to safeguard the collections including the cataloging of artifacts, rewriting of exhibit cards, and carrying out deferred maintenance.

The museum, Arlington's oldest standing school and a National Register of Historic Places site, is the centerpiece of AHS' most ambitious project since our founding—**the restoration and renovation of the 1891 Hume School building**. In October 2020, AHS contracted John Milner Associates Preservation, a division of MTF Architecture in Arlington, Virginia, to conduct a feasibility study of the museum building. The study found the building structurally sound but in need of extensive preservation work to protect it from water penetration and further deterioration. Several preservation needs were identified including museum-wide window restoration, modernization of the HVAC system, and waterproofing. The latter would shield the building from ground water leakage.

A community history museum is more than a building and AHS is conducting a long-term visioning exercise on how we display, store, and explain Arlington's rich and diverse history. Currently, the largest

use of museum space is for storage. We are exploring the feasibility of offsite storage and the use of reclaimed onsite storage space for additional exhibit areas and a meeting room. Access to all must be part of our “new” museum and we are planning accessibility upgrades to our bathrooms and an elevator. A preservation and renovation committee was formed to oversee the work on the museum.

In the national turmoil around race relations and the COVID-19 pandemic in the past year, AHS’s mission to tell the history of all Arlingtonians, including those excluded from traditional histories, has gained urgency. To start remedying omissions, AHS is focusing on identifying ways the museum can better explore these diverse voices in our community.

Over the next several months, AHS will update the public on these efforts and launch the largest capital campaign in our history.

A few days after the end of our fiscal year, on July 4, 2021, the Arlington History Museum reopened to the public. The reopening would not have been possible without the “deep cleaning” Museum Director Dr. Mark Benbow organized on June 26. Reopening was also aided by Docent Coordinator, David Pearson, reengaging our volunteer docents, updating their manual, and creating reopening procedures for the safety of visitors and volunteers.

### **Ball-Sellers House**

The Ball-Sellers House (BSH), located in Arlington’s Glencarlynn neighborhood, is Arlington’s oldest house, dating back to the 1740s. Due to the pandemic, the house was closed to the public for its 2020 season and onsite events cancelled. While closed, Ball-Sellers’s caretakers maintained the house and grounds.

In early 2021, some “by appointment only” tours were conducted. The museum was fully reopened to the public on June 12, 2021. As part of the reopening, local historian Kevin Vincent lead a walking tour of some of the 1,200 acres purchased by George Washington in what is now Arlington. Among the remnants of the property are survey markers used by Washington in 1785, historic springs, and the site of a mill built by George Washington’s step-grandson.

In the spring of 2021, BSH began partnering with the Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia (MGNV) on a garden project. Two

MGNV interns, Cheryl Vann and Kathie Clements, volunteered to create a landscaping plan for the BSH gardens using historically accurate colonial plantings and designs. This project will help Cheryl and Kathie complete MGNV internship requirements.

### **AHS Website and Social Media**

AHS maintains a comprehensive website at [arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org](http://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org). The site includes extensive information on Arlington history, AHS properties and collections, past and present events, and publications. The website also houses our expanding collection of visual resources including historical photographs and videos. *Storymap*, created by Charlie Clark, features an interactive map of Arlington in 1920. In addition, the site includes virtual exhibits, such as *Crepe Upon the Door: Pandemics in Arlington County*, and *the African American Experience in Arlington*.

AHS uses social media to reach as large and diverse an audience as possible. Our accounts include Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram:

- [facebook.com/ArlingtonHistoricalSociety](https://facebook.com/ArlingtonHistoricalSociety)
- [twitter.com/ArlHist](https://twitter.com/ArlHist)
- [instagram.com/arlingtonhistory/](https://instagram.com/arlingtonhistory/)

A daily feature on these sites is “On This Day in Arlington History,” produced in conjunction with Arlington Independent Media. We also provide updates on AHS resources and events.

Over the past year, the AHS Bookshop added many new titles. The pandemic increased sales and we were able to fulfill orders through our online bookshop portal.

### **Education**

In the summer of 2020, AHS launched an online education portal ([arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/education/](http://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/education/)). Our goal is to teach Arlington history to learners of all ages in fun and creative ways. The portal has learning activities and educator resources.

The pandemic illustrated the need for virtual educational content that was engaging and enjoyable. For the past two summers, AHS organized scavenger hunts, one for elementary students and the other for teens and adults. Participants looked for places of historical significance and submitted answers to questions along with pictures of the

sites. Winners received gift certificates to local restaurants. In August of 2020, AHS held its first online trivia contest. Quiz rules were drafted, and a PowerPoint created filled with photos and fun facts, and even a recipe to an official quiz drink (the Gin Rickey). The first place winner received a \$50.00 gift certificate to Athena Pallas, and runners-up prizes from the AHS shop.

The Arlington Historical Society, in partnership with Cherrydale-Columbia Lodge 42, sponsored the 2021 student historical essay contest. The topic for this year's essay:

On September 11, 2001—20 years ago—terrorists executed four devastating coordinated attacks on US soil. One of these strikes occurred at the Pentagon in Arlington. How did the 9/11 attack affect Arlington? As a community, are we successfully remembering and memorializing the day?

The winner of the contest and a \$1,000 prize donated by the Cherrydale-Columbia Lodge 42 was Grace Freitas, a junior at Bishop O'Connell High School. The winning essay is featured in the magazine.

### **Public Programs**

During the summer of 2020, due to the pandemic, AHS continued providing its monthly public lecture series online. In July, we hosted a talk on the Ground Observer Corps, today a little-known program. Corps enthusiast Deb Fuller explained its organization in the early 1950s as part of the US Air Force Civil Defense Service, and while national in scope, Arlington observers knew they were at “ground zero.” In August, local reenactors, Edward W. Gantt, Ben Hawley, and Michael Schaffner presented on African American regiments of the Civil War mustered in what is now Arlington County. The talk focused on the Second United States Colored Infantry and the Twenty-Third United States Colored Troops. Stories of individual soldiers and the recruitment and pay controversies they faced were discussed.

AHS fall programming featured a September lecture by local resident and attorney Richard Samp on *Runyon vs. McCrory*, a US Supreme Court case targeting private school segregation. The case involved a local

whites-only private preschool that fought integration. Ultimately, the Supreme Court extended the racial segregation ban to private schools. In October, popular past speaker, historian Dr. Lindsey Bestebreurtje, presented “The Fastest Growing County in America: Suburbanization, Segregation, and Community Development in Arlington.” Dr. Bestebreurtje’s presentation explored the impact of segregation and racialized zoning and planning laws on the county’s suburban growth. In November, author and historian Ric Murphy discussed his book *Section 27 and Freedman’s Village in Arlington National Cemetery: The African American History of America’s Most Hallowed Ground*. Dr. Murphy shared the history of African American and pauper burials in Arlington National Cemetery and his perspectives on their relevance today.

Our 2020 programming ended with a December presentation by Professor Alice Reagan of Northern Virginia Community College. She spoke on women suffragists’ incarceration and “night of terror” at the Occoquan Workhouse in Lorton, Virginia, where they were beaten and harassed. Professor Reagan argued the negative publicity from Occoquan pushed Woodrow Wilson to support the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, granting women’s suffrage.

AHS started 2021 with a busy January. AHS and the Warren G. Stambaugh Foundation released a tribute and video documentary, “I Remember Warren A. Stambaugh,” to benefit the AHS Building Fund. Stambaugh, an Arlington delegate to the General Assembly, was a pioneering disability advocate. The successful event raised \$34,720. Our January public program featured County Manager, Mark Schwartz, who lectured on the Arlington of one hundred years ago and today. Through extensive use of the 1920 census, Mr. Schwartz compared Arlington’s population, housing, and demographics in 1920 to current trends and traced the county from a rural area of farms to a densely populated community with housing developments, new businesses, and modernized infrastructure. On January 19, AHS participated in the nationwide memorial to COVID-19 in a ceremony at the Arlington History Museum with a bell ringing and building illumination.

Over the winter, AHS anticipated a county-wide celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the renaming of Alexandria County to Arlington County. Due to the pandemic, the event has been rescheduled

for November of 2021. A time capsule containing items from 2020 that document Arlington's response to the pandemic, including a 2020 Arlington Historical Magazine and newsletter, will be sealed at the celebration.

In February and March, AHS held events related to race and remembrance. In February, Dr. Denise Meringolo, a public history professor at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, gave a talk titled "Monuments, Memory, and History" about the renaming and removal of Confederate memorials. Professor Meringolo discussed when and why the Confederacy and its generals were memorialized and how communities might address issues with these monuments in the present day. Retired Arlington Fire Department Battalion Chief J. Dale Smith spoke in March. He lectured on the 1918 establishment of Fire Station 8, Halls Hill Volunteer Fire Department, to protect the largely African American community. Chief Smith's online talk was richly illustrated, informative on fighting both fires and Jim Crow, and provided interviews with two of Halls Hill's oldest surviving firefighters, Hartman Reed and Chief Smith's father, Jerome Smith.

In April, Peter Vaselopulos talked about Upton's Hill's history and its importance as a logistics center for the Union Army including facts about some of the 50 Union regiments and 35,000 soldiers known to have encamped there. His lecture was motivated by the fate of the Dominion Hills/Upton's Hill Febrey-Lothrop-Rouse house and its nine acres, which was bought by developers and slated for demolition. AHS supported designation of the house as a local historical district (LHD) to stave off demolition as did the Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB). Ultimately, a demolition permit was issued, and the house destroyed. Board member Tom Dickinson help lead community efforts to preserve the estate and document its history.

In May, the AHS Annual Meeting was held online. AHS membership ratified the Society's officers and board of directors including local author and journalist Charlie Clark and reenactor and poet Michael Schaffner. Following the meeting, Dr. Mark Benbow (Arlington History Museum Director) discussed the history of the Hume School Building, its establishment as a school in 1891, the 1890s community it served, some of its early teachers and students, and its transformation into a museum. AHS President, Cathy Hix concluded the evening

with remarks on future plans for the museum and a planned capital campaign.

June saw the last virtual event of our year with a talk by author and retired Army officer, Marty Suydam, on one of Arlington's nearly forgotten founding families, the Frasers. The Frasers story is also the story of 200 years of local history. The Fraser's Green Valley plantation at one time covered 1,000 acres including a substantial portion of Arlington Ridge and the Army Navy Country Club. Green Valley, often called Nauck, was one of Arlington's earliest African American communities. Mr. Suydam's lecture was an extension of his series of short stories on hard-to-find Arlington history, *Walks with Charley*.

### **Membership**

The Society maintained the following membership categories: Life (one-time payment of \$1,000 by an individual), Business/Organization (\$350 annual payment), Sponsor (\$100 annual payment), Dual (\$50 annual payment), and Individual (\$35 annual payment). Sponsor and Dual memberships may be held in the names of two individuals. As of June 30, 2021, the final day of AHS's fiscal year, the Society had 402 memberships, some of which included multiple members. Its Life, Sponsor, and Business members as of that date were:

### **Life Members**

Kathleen Ausley	Edwin Fountain
M. Barr*	Daun Frankland
Greg Bayens	Dr. Claudine Gay-Bryant
Carol Laikin Carpenter	Robert Henry Gills
Jane Patrick Casey	Kathrine L. Hamblett
Charles Casserly & Beverley Kelly	Harold Handerson
Susan Christopher	Don Hartline
Loretta V. Cleek	Cathy Bonneville Hix
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Anne C. Webb  
\*Deceased as of June 30, 2020

### **Sponsor Members**

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Dominion Energy  
Fairlington Historical Society  
Glass Distributors Inc.

John Marshall Bank  
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Foundation

## Financial Information

AHS publishes its annual financial and operations information in its September newsletter.

**Donations:** In fiscal year 2020–2021, the AHS received many donations including historical artifacts, monetary contributions, and gifts of equipment and supplies. Thank you to all our generous donors.

## Artifacts

### **The Society received the following donations to our collection:**

- Joyce Mader, collections of *Harpers* dating from 1861–1862, many with illustrations of the forts in Arlington and Alexandria. Ms. Mader included an index of the most notable contents of each issue.
- Lois Chadbourne, several antique cameras.
- Tom Dickinson, media devices for our twentieth century technology displays including a TV antenna and a small 1980s portable TV. He also donated several COVID items including signs and some (empty) vaccine vials.
- Sean Denniston, menus from multiple Arlington restaurants.
- Tim Landis, multiple artifacts from the Rosslyn area, ca. late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
- George Axiotis, Apple IIe computer.
- Pamela Jones, portraits of Harry and Alice Fellows from “Memory House” in North Arlington.
- Helen Onufrak, felt pennant from Fairlington Elementary, 1960s.
- Don Stocking, Virginia State flag that flew over McKinney Elementary School in the 1960s.
- Donald Skinner, framed photo of the class of 1930 at Washington-Lee High School.
- Joel Wood and family, pump organ that came from the Scherb Family farm in Cherrydale, ca. late 1800s.
- Erik Rasmussen, antique rustic wooden rustic bench, ca. 1870, currently on display in the Ball-Sellers House; woven coverlet,

navy and cream floral pattern, 1851; a child's wooden chair with woven reed seat.

- Maureen Donnelly, tan and navy woven coverlet with snowball pattern, ca. early nineteenth century; hand stitched wool quilt with brown, gray, and red material and cotton batting, ca. 1920.
- Ross Shearer, photograph album of building construction in Clarendon on Washington Boulevard, 1950s.
- Multiple items were acquired through online auction sites.

## General Monetary Donations

### \$100 and Above

James & Jane Adams	Katherine Hamblett
Richard & Jocelyn Anderson	Bernard Hamm Sr.
David & Ginger Ansell	Adrian & Ed Hilz
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Patricia Watts  
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### **Below \$100**

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### **Special Monetary Donations**

#### **Hume School Building Fund**

Aurora Hills Women's Club	Robert U. MacDonald in memory of Curtis U. & Jean H. MacDonald
Katherine Ausley	
Fairlington Historical Board of Trustees	MFTA Architecture
David Fritts	Alan Reiter

#### **Jim Pebley Memorial 9/11 Fund**

Arlington County Republican Committee	Betty Hill
Jeanne Broyhill & Joe Ventrone	Barbara Kanninen & Kevin Wolf
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## **I Remember Warren Stambaugh Fund**

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If a donation or donor's name has been inadvertently omitted from this list, please notify the Arlington Historical Society at P.O. Box 100402, Arlington, VA 22210-3402. The Society apologizes for any such error.