



Arlington Historical Society

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Arlington Historical Society

Summer 2023

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Arlington Historical Museum

1805 South Arlington Ridge Road
Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays
1:00 - 4:00 PM

Ball-Sellers House

5620 3rd Street, South
Saturdays from 1:00-4:00 PM
through the end of October

Virtual AHS

Website:

<https://arlingtonhistorical.society.org>

Facebook: Arlington Historical Society

Twitter: #ArlingtonHistory

Instagram: ArlingtonHistory

AHS Board Meeting

Board meetings are on the fourth Tuesday of every month

President's Dispatch

Hello, this is my initial President's Dispatch! I am David Pearson, a lifelong Arlington resident who grew up in Buckingham, Bluemont, and Ashton Heights. I currently live in Donaldson Run with my wife and three children. I have been an AHS Board member for the last two years, oversee the docents at the Arlington Historical Museum, and also serve as a docent—come see me there on the second Saturday of the month. I am often at AHS events and would love to meet you!

First, a special thank you to Cathy Hix for the five years she has served as President of AHS! We are very fortunate that she will remain active on the AHS Board as we continue the initiatives we have begun under her leadership. When not fielding my various questions, Cathy will be focusing on her passion for developing and delivering educational resources about Arlington history.

In addition, AHS will continue to benefit from a working Board and many dedicated volunteers. Together we work to fulfill our mission of improving our community by building knowledge of our diverse history. We achieve this through various means, including operating two museums, sponsoring monthly presentations with a featured speaker, providing daily content to our social media platforms, presenting at local organizations, running booths at local events, publishing a quarterly newsletter and annual magazine, providing preservation and educational resources, and maintaining an up-to-date website that makes it easy to find everything listed above. We do all this as a private non-profit organization with no paid staff, and our funding currently comes exclusively from our members and other private sources. We really cannot thank our members and volunteers enough for all the support!

Near to my heart is the Arlington Historical Museum. I first visited the museum in the mid-1980s with my scout troop and earned a Citizenship in the Community Merit Badge. It was my first time learning about Arlington's history, including the fact that it was once called Alexandria, DC. Today, many people learn that there was a segregation wall in North Arlington, hear about why there are so many Union artifacts in the county, and read about the Wright Brothers' flights in Arlington.

There is so much more to tell! We have embarked on an ambitious multi-year preservation and renovation project that will allow us to repair and protect the 1891 museum building and allow us to expand the exhibition area to the second floor in an accessible way. We are excited about the opportunity to design additional exhibits to showcase some of the stories of the county that we do not currently have on display, such as Clarendon's role in the Vietnamese community and the rise of the Latino

community in Arlington. But we face significant fundraising challenges and need our members and the community to rally behind this effort. We welcome volunteers and ideas (and donations) as we make the Arlington Historical Museum the pride of the whole community!

Upcoming AHS Events

Unless otherwise noted, all events are free to the public and monthly events are held virtually via Zoom and in-person at the library auditorium on the Marymount University main campus. Visit <https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/events> for Zoom access or directions to free on-campus parking.

Saturday, June 3, 2023, 10-4 pm

Living History Day at Fort C.F. Smith



Visit the AHS table to see Civil War artifacts, local maps of the era, and learn more about Civil War history in our area. From 1861 to 1865, US Army soldiers garrisoned in Arlington built a

defensive line to protect Washington, D.C. from potential Confederate attack. Ft. C.F. Smith will host walking tours, history activities, and US Army demonstrations from Civil War reenactors. (Ft. C.F. Smith, 2411 N. 24th St.)

Thursday, June 8, 2023, 7 pm

Civil War Convalescent Camps in Arlington



During the Civil War, Arlington's defenses housed thousands of US Army troops. Arlington was also home to hospital camps that treated the injured and sick. Civil War reenactor and historian

Michael Schaffner will talk about how they worked, who ran them, and what we learned from them.

Thursday, July 13, 2023, 7 pm

Commemorating Queen City

Artist Nekisha Durrett will discuss her artwork commemorating the destruction of Queen City when the Pentagon was built. The artwork includes several mediums and will be unveiled on June 1 at Metropolitan Park in Crystal City.



Thursday, August 10, 2023, 7 pm

Historic Gardening at

Arlington House

Reenactor and volunteer with Friends of Urban Agriculture Sandy Newton combines history and gardening will discuss the historic gardening methods she uses at the National Park Service vegetable and herb gardens on the grounds of Arlington House.



SAVE THE DATE: AHS Annual Banquet September 27th, 2023

The Arlington Historical Society will gather at the Washington Golf and Country Club on **Wednesday, September 27th** to host its annual banquet. The banquet will focus on the importance of preservation in our county. We are honored to welcome noted philanthropist and founder of the Carlyle Group, David Rubenstein as our guest speaker. In 2021, Mr. Rubenstein provided funding for a major project at the Arlington House. The rehabilitation project improved visitor access and interpretation of exhibits. It also restored the early 19th century mansion, dependencies, and immediate grounds. Tickets for this event go on sale to members in mid-June. Non-members can purchase tickets beginning August 15th. We hope you will join us for this noteworthy event.



Save Yourself Time and the Arlington Historical Society 58 Cents!

Most AHS memberships (except for Life members and members who joined March 2022 or later) are due for renewal **June 30, 2023**. Save yourself and AHS time and 58 cents by renewing online now! Go to:

<https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/online-application/>

Your membership dues support AHS's mission of preserving, promoting, and interpreting Arlington County's history. All members get the following benefits:

- Subscription to annual Arlington Historical Magazine
- Ten percent discount at Arlington Historical Museum shop and our online store
- Subscription to our periodic newsletter
- Invitations to members-only events
- Priority ticketing and discounts for annual banquet and other ticketed events



Sponsor level and Life members also receive:

- Free admission/shop discounts at over one thousand cultural institutions through North American Reciprocal Museum (NARM) Association
- Recognition in Arlington Historical Magazine and annual banquet program

Business/Organization members also get recognition in each issue of the Society's newsletter, Arlington Historical Magazine, and annual banquet program. Thank you to members at all levels for your support!

Gone But Not Forgotten: Giffords Ice Cream

By Erica Wargo

Ever head to Giffords for ice cream on a warm summer evening after attending a local sporting event? Or after earning good grades on your report card? The ice cream parlor located on Lee Highway (now Langston Boulevard) was the place to go for fresh dipped ice cream, sundaes, and banana splits. Many Arlington residents remember it fondly. Today, the building still stands and was until recently, the location of Joes Pizza and Pasta and now Modo Mia.



Gifford's Ice Cream and Candy Company was founded in 1939 by John Nash and Mary Francis Gifford with other partners. The original parlor was in Maryland but by 1956 there were five locations in the Washington, D.C. area including Arlington's. Eventually the company was run by Bob Gifford, son of the original owners. During his tenure, Giffords struggled to stay afloat. Nevertheless, Gifford's Ice Cream evokes great memories for those who visited the place. But there was controversy related to the chain including allegations of embezzlement. Andrew Gifford, grandson of the original owner told a story of scandal in his memoir, *We All Scream for Ice Cream. The Fall of the Gifford's Ice Cream Empire*. The memoir documents his mother's mental illness and the disappearance of his father as the company faced financial problems.

Giffords would eventually be sold to a new owner who revived it for a decade. Gifford ice cream products can still be found in some stores, though some say it is not like the original products from the parlor. Meanwhile, the Gifford legacy in Arlington lives on. There is a Giffords Facebook group and people share anecdotes on social media related to their Gifford experience recalling treats such as pitchers of hot fudge, swiss chocolate, and great ice cream flavors (*Authors note- my favorite was a double dip chocolate chip ice cream cone*). Despite its absence from Arlington, it is clear that Giffords may be GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN.

Protecting the AHS Museum Collection from Agents of Deterioration

By Karen Edgerton, AHS Collections Manager

Did you know that less than 10% of objects held by museums are on display at any given time? The Arlington Historical Museum is no different. Caring for and preserving the objects that aren't on display is an important part of museum work done by AHS. We want to make sure that objects are preserved for future generations of museum visitors and researchers.

Have you ever noticed that if you leave a piece of paper out in the sun and partially cover it, the uncovered part turns yellow over time? Have you unfolded a sweater in fall to find moth holes? Or gone through old photos to find them mildewed or stuck together? In the museum world we refer to the forces that degrade objects as "Agents of Deterioration." Critters, light, humidity, temperature, and air pollution are some of these "agents." Without proper preservation, museum artifacts won't withstand the agents of deterioration. So how do we make sure artifacts are properly preserved?

That's the job of a Collections Manager! Allow me to introduce myself: my name is Karen Edgerton, and I'm the new Collections Manager for AHS. I completed a Museum Studies Certificate from the University of Washington in June 2022. After that, I worked at Mount Rainier National Park in the Curatorial Department doing collections management. This is my third career, so I have tons of project management experience, too. When I relocated to Arlington last year, I volunteered with AHS to help catalog objects, but I soon found my expertise was needed to help bring collections care in line with museum best practices. Since December, I've been working hard to get the collection reorganized after the big move to offsite storage, making sure documentation is up-to-date, and ensuring that artifacts are stored in the best way that our budget allows. *(At right: Karen, hard at work in the AHS collection).*



One way we preserve artifacts is by making sure they're in archival housing. Boxes, tissue paper, folders, tags, and markers must be made of archival materials that won't damage artifacts. Archival housing is pricey. A regular cardboard box from Staples costs about \$1.50. An archival box costs about \$13! Your membership fees and donations to AHS help us ensure that every artifact is protected by being stored in stable archival housing.

Another way we preserve artifacts is by maintaining an accurate database with photos of every artifact in the collection. AHS has over 5,000 cataloged artifacts and easily 1,000 more uncataloged artifacts. One of my goals is to update the database so we can share our collection online for everyone to see. Another goal is to start making a dent in the backlog of uncataloged artifacts. It's important, time-consuming work that no museum every really finishes!

All volunteer-led museums face the same collections management challenges that AHS faces. If you would like to help, please email AHS (info@arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org). I'm working hard to make sure our artifacts get the best care possible.

Memorializing the Enslaved in Arlington: Samuel Smith

This article highlights just some of the information researched for the Memorializing the Enslaved in Arlington Project. It was written by Heidi Fritschel, a volunteer on this project.

Samuel Smith was born enslaved in 1826. His enslavers, William and Catherine Minor, owned a farm called Springfield near the present-day site of Yorktown High School. Records show that William Minor owned 20 slaves in 1830 and 10 slaves in 1840 and 1850.

When William died in 1859, his will stipulated that Samuel and his brother Joseph be freed:

In token of my appreciation of the extreme faithfulness with which each of my slaves viz: Joe Smith and Sam Smith have served me, I will that they shall each be free from servitude at the end of the year in which the death of my wife shall occur. That one acre of my Springfield Farm shall be [?] off, for the use of each, around the cabins they now respectively occupy and that they be allowed to enjoy the use thereof so long as the law will permit.

Samuel's farm lay near the present-day intersection of Harrison Street and Little Falls Road. Samuel does not appear on the 1860 census, either free or enslaved, but he is listed in an 1867 roll of colored voters in the county.

In 1875, Samuel gave testimony to the Southern Claims Court in the case of Catherine Minor, William's wife. The court compensated citizens for items that Union troops had used, stolen, or destroyed during the Civil War. To receive compensation,

applicants had to prove both that they were pro-Union and that the property damage had been carried out by Union soldiers. For the Minor case, a stenographer transcribed, seemingly word for word, the somewhat lengthy interview with Samuel Smith.

The interview reveals that Samuel spent part or all of the war in Washington and that he himself had brought a successful claim before the court. He testified to his proximity to the Minors' farm, to the damage wrought by Union soldiers, and to William Minor's Union sympathies:

Q. What do you know about Mr. Minor's loyalty?

A. Well, I have always heard him say that he would go for the Union and that if the Union was split that we would be gone up.

Five years later, the 1880 Census gives us a picture of who was living on Samuel's farm:

- Samuel (age 54)
- Annie, his wife, (age 37)
- Daughters: Elizabeth (age 20) and Martha (age 6)
- Son: John S. (age 14)
- Granddaughter: Mary (age 10).

After 1880 the trail of records and documents mentioning Samuel Smith disappears, some of his descendants remained in the county for several decades. The 1890 Census was destroyed by fire, but

the 1900 Census shows his son, John S. Smith, still living in the county with his family of five children, including an eight-year-old son named Samuel.



The location of Samuel Smith's property is shown on an 1887 atlas of the Washington area, including what was then called Alexandria County.

Still Standing: The Green Valley Pharmacy



Pharmacist Leonard Muse
(photo courtesy Lloyd Wolf)

The historic Green Valley Pharmacy has been a landmark in South Arlington for years. Opened in 1952 amid the Jim Crow era, this pharmacy and lunch counter was the only one in Arlington that would serve the black community.

The building where the pharmacy was located was built in 1942. It was originally Hyman's grocery. In 1952, it was purchased by Leonard Muse and his partner Waverly Jones. Muse, or Doc Muse as he was fondly known, became the sole owner in 1955.

During the Jim Crow era, it was quite difficult for blacks to obtain medicines. In pharmacies throughout the county, blacks had to enter through back entrances and were often treated poorly. With the opening of the Green Valley Pharmacy, that changed. Black and white customers were welcomed and it became a gathering spot for the neighborhood. The lunch counter was especially popular serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner as well as desserts.

Doc Muse steadfastly kept this pharmacy open for over six decades. He passed away in 2017 and the property reverted to his daughter and the pharmacy was closed. The Green Valley Pharmacy was designated as a Local Historic District in 2013. While the pharmacy will not return, plans to open a kabob restaurant in the building are underway and could be implemented this summer. Despite a restaurant taking over the building, the historical features of the building will remain intact, and the legacy of Doc Muse and the Green Valley Pharmacy will be STILL STANDING.

Stewardship of Your Money

The AHS depends on donations and membership fees to allow us to carry out our mission. Your financial donations have allowed us to continue the following work:

- Acquisition of new items for the museum
- Materials for the archiving of the museum artifacts and monthly events
- Early registration for Arlington County Fair
- The management of a Zoom account that we use to live stream events so we can have both in-person and virtual presentations.

Thank you to our business/organization members

Aurora Hills Women's Club
John Marshall Bank
JBG Smith Cares
Fairlington Historical Society
Marymount University
MTFA

Help Wanted: Newsletter Editor

For the past three years, Heather Spadero has done a phenomenal job as editor of this AHS newsletter. AHS is very appreciative of all her work. Sadly, this will be Heather's last newsletter and she will be missed.



AHS is looking for a volunteer newsletter editor. We are hoping that we have an AHS member who would like to take this job. We publish four newsletters a year. The newsletter editor receives all the articles electronically and is responsible for putting them in newsletter format. **Please email info@arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org if this is something you would be willing to do. Thank you!**

AHS in Our Community: April through June 2023

AHS owns and operates two museums: The Arlington Historical Museum and the Ball-Sellers House. Admission is free and these museums are operated and staffed by AHS volunteers. AHS also brought history to the community in the following ways:

- At the April free public event, AHS partnered with the Black Heritage Museum of Arlington to host Greg Embree who spoke about the Cherrydale lunch counter sit-ins in the 1960s. In the audience was participant Joan Trumpauer Mulholland who provided recollections and perspective.
- The Arlington Historical Museum and the Ball-Seller's House hosted tours for Karl VanNewkirk's Encore Learning Class.
- The Ball-Seller's house also hosted an Annette Benbow-led tour by the McLean Questers Patowmack Seeker Chapter #1465.
- The Ball-Seller's House hosted visits across a couple of days from the Carlin Springs Elementary School kindergartens. Sandy Newton was in period costume demonstrating spinning, carding, and grinding of corn, and Gail Ammons, Annette Benbow, and Ken Cohn provided tours of the house and the grounds.
- The Ball-Seller's House hosted its season reopening event, Threading History. This free festival featured demonstrations of carding, spinning, weaving and embroidery, as well as tours of the Ball-Seller's house. The demonstration was led by Sandy Newton with Elise Milstein and her niece Zoe in period costume, and Catherine Aselford, David Pearson, Michael Schaffner, and Margaret Wagner and tours provided by Mary Vihstadt and Annette Benbow. Sweet treats were provided by Mary Vihstadt, Susan Webber, and Janie Wulf.
- AHS jointly hosted (with the USS Arlington Community Alliance in cooperation with Arlington County) the USS Arlington Display Dedication at the reopening of the Bozman Government Center. David Pearson spoke on behalf of AHS. AHS had raised the funds to provide the model of the USS Arlington that is now featured in the lobby of the Bozman Government Center.
- At the May free public event, Arlington Sports Hall of Fame board member and "career" Arlington ballplayer Johnathan Thomas presented photos and stories about the history of Arlington baseball.
- The Ball-Seller's House hosted the annual George Washington's Forest Guided History Walk, led by local historian Kevin Vincent.
- The Ball-Seller's House hosted a Smithsonian Associates bus tour.
- At the June free public event, board member and Civil War historian Michael Schaffner spoke about how Arlington's convalescent camps worked, who was posted there and how the camps changed during the war.
- AHS operated a booth at the Living History at Fort C.F. Smith, staffed by AHS volunteers.
- AHS volunteers at the Ball-Sellers House participated in the Glencarlyn Heritage Day parade.
- AHS Board Members Cathy Hix, Charlie Clark, Jessica Kaplan, Mark Benbow and Annette Benbow continue to give presentations about AHS to Arlington civic associations and other local organizations.
- AHS Board Member Sean Denniston briefed the Aurora Hills Civic Association on Black History in Arlington.
- AHS Board Members Cathy Hix, David Pearson and Annette Benbow worked with Arlington Convention and Visitors Service to expand the partnership between AHS and the county to bring the history of Arlington to more people.

Note: We livestream all our monthly events. The videos are edited and available on [AHS's website](#).



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History Awaits Come Visit!

Arlington Historical Museum
1805 South Arlington Ridge Road
Arlington, VA 22202

Ball-Sellers House Museum
5620 Third Street South
Arlington, VA 22204

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>
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