



Arlington Historical Society

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Arlington Historical Society

Fall 2023

President's Dispatch

Summers are often times of rest and relaxation, but they can also be good times to tackle new projects, engage with students who suddenly have time to meaningfully explore interests, meet people in the community and plan for fall activities. As I think about the past summer, we have been busy on all these fronts.

First, for the Memorializing the Enslaved in Arlington project, we have moved beyond the initial research stage (that isn't to say the research is completed) towards realizing our goal of physically marking the locations in the county where slavery occurred with "stumbling stones," which will be plaques that provide the names of the enslaved (where available) and other information about these individuals. AHS's efforts on this are led by Jessica Kaplan, who has secured approval from the Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board to allow AHS to place the first stumbling stone on the grounds of the Ball-Sellers House. We are working with the Arlington Career Center to manufacture the plaques, and we hope to have an unveiling in the not-too-distant future!

But that's not all on the new projects front! Cathy Hix has been working with leaders in the Latino and Asian communities as we examine our museum collection, artifact displays, and stories that we present, and thereby identify areas where we are missing vital parts of the Arlington story or those stories could be told better and from multiple perspectives.

This past summer we had several student interns working with our Collections Manager Karen Edgerton to improve our collections practices and procedures. Kathleen Lauer worked with Karen and the museum committee to update the AHS collection policy and procedures documents, and her resulting drafts were approved by the AHS board. Anita Hill went through 61 years of artifact accession deeds and reviewed our artifacts on loan, and improved our recordkeeping. Colin Wilson evaluated our artifacts in storage and improved their housing, making sure that artifacts belong in our collection, and cataloging scores of them in our collection management system. All of these were big projects, and our collection and collection practices are greatly improved by their efforts!

As always, we were out in the community this summer—notably at the county fair! We had a number of volunteers staff our booth that was put together by Annette and Mark Benbow. As always, we had a lot of fun talking to people in the community about Arlington History!

Finally, we have been preparing for our banquet, which features patriotic philanthropist David M. Rubenstein interviewed by AHS board member (and George Washington Park Custis biographer) Charlie Clark speaking about the Arlington House. This will be an evening to remember!

And there is so much more! We hope that you are proud of your Arlington Historical Society. As always, we are on the lookout for new topics to explore, better ways to do things and volunteers to help us out. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any ideas you may have. Thank you for your support of the Arlington Historical Society.

Upcoming AHS Events

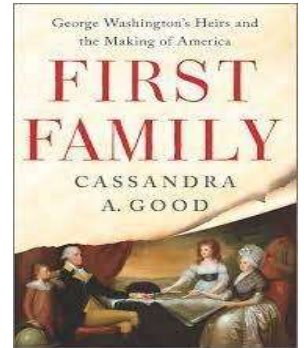
Unless otherwise noted, all events are free to the public and monthly events are held virtually via Zoom and in-person at the library auditorium on the Marymount University main campus.

Visit <https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/events> for Zoom access or directions to free on-campus parking.

Thursday, October 12, 2023, 7 pm

George Washington's Heirs and the Making of America

Historian Dr. Cassandra Good will show how the step grandchildren of George Washington played an overlooked but important role in the development of American society and politics from the Revolution to the Civil War. Beyond Custis, George and Martha raised numerous children together. Our speaker will introduce us to the rest of family and the little-known roles they played in American history. *(Virtual on Zoom and in-person at Marymount University Reinsch Library Auditorium, 2807 N. Glebe Rd, FREE)*



Thursday, November 9, 2023, 7 pm

Operation Skyshield: Cold War Games and Their Impact on Arlington

After the September 2001 terrorist attacks, the media incorrectly reported that all aircraft had been grounded for the first time in history. During Skyshield, a series of national defense exercises in the early 1960s, airlines in the U.S. and Canada were grounded during a simulation of an aerial attack. Retired Smithsonian journalist Roger Mola discovered the lessons of Skyshield and its impact on Arlington and its environs. *(Virtual on Zoom and in-person at Marymount University Reinsch Library Auditorium, 2807 N. Glebe Rd, FREE)*



Thursday, December 14, 2023, 7 pm

Desegregating Libraries in Northern Virginia

During the Jim Crow era, most public libraries were segregated and inaccessible to Black residents. Discover the truth about the barriers imposed on the Black community and learn how citizens used protests and lawsuits to gain more equitable library services. Fairfax County librarians and authors Chris Barbuschak and Suzanne LaPierre tell the little-known history of segregated library services in Northern Virginia. *(Virtual on Zoom and in-person at Marymount University Reinsch Library Auditorium, 2807 N. Glebe Rd, FREE)*



Thursday, January 11, 2024, 7 pm

The Life and Times of the Falls Church News Press

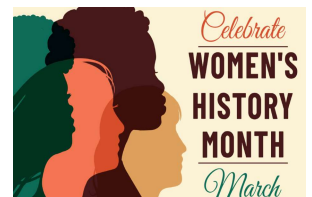
For more than 30 years, this newspaper has delivered a must-read chronicle of doings not just in Falls Church, but in Arlington, too. The free weekly paper has captured clashes over development, political races, holiday celebrations, and even scandals. Author Charlie Clark, the paper's "Our Man in Arlington" columnist, tells the tale of editor, Nick Benton, the paper's founder who has kept it going even as local news is in peril. *(Virtual on Zoom and in-person at Marymount University Reinsch Library Auditorium, 2807 N. Glebe Rd, FREE)*



Thursday, March 14, 2024, 7 pm

Notable Women in Arlington

To help celebrate Women's hHistory Month, Former AHS President and lifelong educator Cathy Hix will discuss several women who have made a substantial difference in our community. *(Virtual on Zoom and in-person at Marymount University Reinsch Library Auditorium, 2807 N. Glebe Rd, FREE)*



Amelia Earhart In Arlington

By Ciro Taddeo

Amelia Earhart, one of the foremost pioneers in American aviation was no stranger to Arlington County. Aside from being a friend and visitor to suffragist leader Gertrude Crocker's restaurant, The Little Tea House, on Arlington Ridge Road, Earhart was a frequent passenger aboard one of the earliest commercial airlines, the Ford Tri-Motor Transcontinental Air Transport (TAT) airplane, which landed at the old Hoover Airfield (now the site of the Pentagon). At right, is a 1930 photo of Amelia Earhart (center) posing in front of a Ford Tri Motor airplane at Hoover Airfield with a women's business club. Look closely, and you will see the U.S. Capitol in the distance.



"Fields to Flight: Commercial Aviation in Arlington," the current temporary exhibit at the Arlington Historical Museum, includes a 1920's model of a Ford Tri-Motor passenger airplane with the TAT logo on it. The exhibit will be up through October.

Virginia 250? It's Not Just About the Declaration of Independence



Soon, you'll be hearing about America's celebration of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. But celebrating America and Arlington history isn't just about the Declaration of Independence in 2026. It's about celebrating who we want to be as a county, state, and country.

In August, the Arlington County Board passed a resolution designating the Arlington Historical Society (AHS) as the lead organization to organize the county's celebrations. AHS seeks to involve ALL of Arlington in the county's 250th celebrations. Discussions are already underway with Arlington County, the county historian, civic and service organizations, the Dorie Miller American Legion Post, the Dream Project, and many others. We plan to ensure that all of Arlington is represented in the many events before, during, and after 2026. An inaugural organizational meeting is planned for this fall.

AHS President David Pearson has designated Vice President Sean Denniston as the lead for AHS with an assist from Annette Benbow, Chair of the AHS Events Committee. If you would like to be involved in this multi-event, multi-year project, or if you know of an organization you would like to make sure is included, please email Annette Benbow (annette.r.benbow@gmail.com)

AHS Essay Contest Challenges Students to Write About Local History

What will be the enduring legacy of the Arlington House estate one hundred years from now? That was the question we posed to Arlington students this year in the AHS Annual Essay Contest. The contest is a collaborative effort with the Cherrydale-Columbia Masonic Lodge who provides the award money. Our goal is to inspire Arlington students in grades 8-12 to research and write about their local history. We were delighted to have exceptional entries from students across the county. The winner this year is Malia Humphries-Do, who made the case for Freedman's Village, once located on the grounds of the Arlington estate, as the most enduring legacy. Her essay, "Freedman's Village: A Continued Legacy of Freedom and Community in Arlington," will be featured in the 2023 Arlington Historical Magazine.

The list of all award winners and their topics are included below:

- 1st Place: Malia Humphries-Do, Holton Arms, grade 9. "Freedman's Village: A Continued Legacy of Freedom and Community in Arlington"
- 2nd Place:: Elizabeth Adams, Washington Liberty, grade 12. "One Night: How a Single Decision Changed the World"
- 3rd Place: Elina Coutlakis, Washington Liberty, grade 12. "Freedman's Village: A Local Experiment Indicative of the Nation"

Honorable Mention

- Natalie Kaldahl, Wakefield, grade 12. "Arlington House: A Controversial Legacy"
- Ryan Cohen, Washington Liberty, grade 12. "Arlington House Estate: Fostering Reconciliation Through Public Perception"

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:

- Adding wi-fi to the museum to allow the museum collections volunteers to work on site
- Maintaining the Ball-Sellers House grounds, including repair of fence posts and rails
- Fund expenses incurred in the research for the *Memorializing the Enslaved in Arlington* project
- Printing pamphlets for use in community events and maintaining the AHS website domain.

Thank you to our business/organization members

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

Casual Adventure: 78 Years Young and Changing with the Times

Casual Adventure, a long-time, locally owned family run store is more than just a heritage business in Arlington, it is a store that IS Arlington. Located in the Virginia Square neighborhood, it has been in this location since it started as a small grocery store in 1945. AHS recently sat down with fourth generation owner, Eric Stern, to talk about what it's like to be the owner of a business that has been around for 78 years.



Stern's office bears witness to his family's legacy. He has a framed photo of his great grandfather, Oscar, who opened the store; a photo of his grandfather in his US Army Air Corps uniform next to the garrison cap he is wearing in it; and a photo of his father with a big warm smile. Also in Stern's office, brought in by a long-time customer, is the store's 1957 wall calendar—a testament to customer loyalty and the store's history.

When Giant Food, Inc moved into Arlington in the early 1950s, Oscar Stern realized it would be difficult to compete so he turned his grocery into a military surplus store. Post World War II Arlington was a great time for this. Many Arlingtonians had military clothes to sell and the Stern family came to the realization that “if it smells, it sells,” meaning that military goods were tough and even after having been worn, would sell well. They began selling to growing numbers of campers and folks seeking outdoor adventures.

Eventually outdoor gear morphed from military surplus and Casual Adventure did, too. The family store continued to serve outdoor activities and today sells all the brand names, as well as some unique Virginia products. The Stern family has also answered the needs of boys and girls scouts with uniforms, badges, and scouting accessories. Plus, customers continue to include all branches of the military, first responders, and the outdoorsy population who want to run, hike, swim, camp, or otherwise be outside for active fun.

Casual Adventure may mimic trends in outdoor gear but owner Eric Stern also shared some thoughts about being in business in Arlington. Arlington, after all, reflects the nation's history. Stern talked about where his father, Neil, was on 9/11. He was in Arlington, driving on Interstate 395 when he saw the hijacked plane fly over. He heard the explosion and saw the smoke rise from the direction of the Pentagon. Since then, Casual Adventure has sponsored a 5K run commemorating 9/11 and it starts near where his father was on that day.

January 6, 2021 was another memorable day for Casual Adventure. Stern remembered all too well getting an emergency message on his cellphone from the Arlington Police in response to the US Capitol Building take-over by Trump supporters. Local authorities, fearing the violence would spread, advised businesses to barricade their entrances and imposed a curfew starting at 6:00 pm. Stern remembers all the store fronts near his Virginia Square store boarded up.

Stern prefers to talk about the more positive side of being a long-time Arlington business. He has a deep appreciation for the growing diversity of his customers both in his store and online and the different languages spoken in his store. He loves it when customers take a picture of the store logo being worn in places all over the world. Stop in at 3451 North Washington Boulevard and you'll see the store in its original building with its wooden floors and the original butcher block table from his great grandfather's grocery with its display of Casual Adventure hats.

Memorializing the Enslaved in Arlington: Winnie Steele

This article highlights just some of the information researched for the Memorializing the Enslaved in Arlington Project.

Page No. 202 Inquiries numbered 7, 16, and 17 are not to be asked in respect to infants. Inquiries numbered 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, and 20 are to be answered (if at all) merely by an affirmative mark, as /.

SCHEDULE 1.—Inhabitants in Washington in the County of Washington, State of D.C.
of Columbia, enumerated by me on the 13 day of July, 1870.

Post Office: Washington, D.C. Thomas Hagerly, Ass't Marshal.

1	2	3	4			7	8		10	11		13	14	15		17	18	19		20
			Age at last birthday, or under year of age	Sex	Color		Value of Real Estate	Value of Personal Estate		Place of Birth, naming State or Territory of U. S.; or the Country, if of foreign birth.	Whether deaf and dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic.			Male Citizens of U. S. of age and of legal capacity	Male Citizens of U. S. of age and of legal capacity					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
1	1	Steele, Winnie	54	F	B	Washerwoman			1	1										
2	1	Winnie	15	F	B	at Sch.														
3	1	Sarah	17	F	B	Washerwoman			1											
4	1	Elijah	1	M	W				1											
5	1	McBostey, William	4	M	B															

1880 US Census, District of Columbia entry for Winnie Steele and her family

According to US Census records, Winnie Steele was born between 1800 and 1810 in Virginia. It's unclear who her parents were or even who her initial enslaver was. Records since show that Basil Williams, a Fairfax County farmer who moved his homestead to Alexandria County, District of Columbia (Arlington today) in the 1820s, became Winnie Steele's enslaver. She lived and toiled on his property on what is today Columbia Pike by Scott Street (near Bob and Edith's Diner).

It's likely that Steele appeared on Alexandria County censuses from 1830 to 1850, but since only race, gender, and age were provided for the enslaved, confirming her listing is difficult. When Williams passed away in 1854, Winnie was mentioned in his probate records including his will, inventory, and account. In his will, William's manumitted Winnie along with all but three of his chattels and provided each with a "legacy" or cash to "assist in conveying to Liberia or any portion of the Western States which [his once enslaved] may feel disposed or permitted to live." In Basil's inventory, listing his property at his death, Winnie Steele's name appears with her three children. The group was valued at \$1,000. Basil's probate account also mentions Winnie, who was given a legacy of \$2. Other former enslaved were given \$20. There were no men with the surname "Steele" in William's probate records.

Upon freedom, Winnie and her children moved to the District of Columbia. The 1860 census captured her and her three children, Sarah, Elijah, and Winnie living with another of Basil William's former enslaved, Fannie Butler and her family. Pooling their resources must have enabled them to survive the transition to freedom. An 1862 Directory of the District of Columbia lists Steele as the "widow of Elijah," living on G St. The date of death for the elder Elijah is unknown. He must have lived or worked near the William's farm to have met Winnie and been the father of their children.

By 1870, Winnie was living in her own space with her three children. It seems likely that her eldest child, Elijah, had passed away by then, because a one-year-old Elijah is named in the census. The census and District directories list Winnie's occupation as a washerwoman. Her daughter, Winnie, took in washing as well. Steele's household continued to grow in the 1870s and 1880s as grandchildren and relatives entered her life and her home.

Winnie passed away on September 17, 1894 in the District of Columbia. She was buried in Harmony Cemetery on 9th and Rhode Island Avenue, NE. In 1959, the cemetery's graves were moved to National Harmony Memorial Park in Landover, Maryland.

AHS in Our Community: June through September 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:

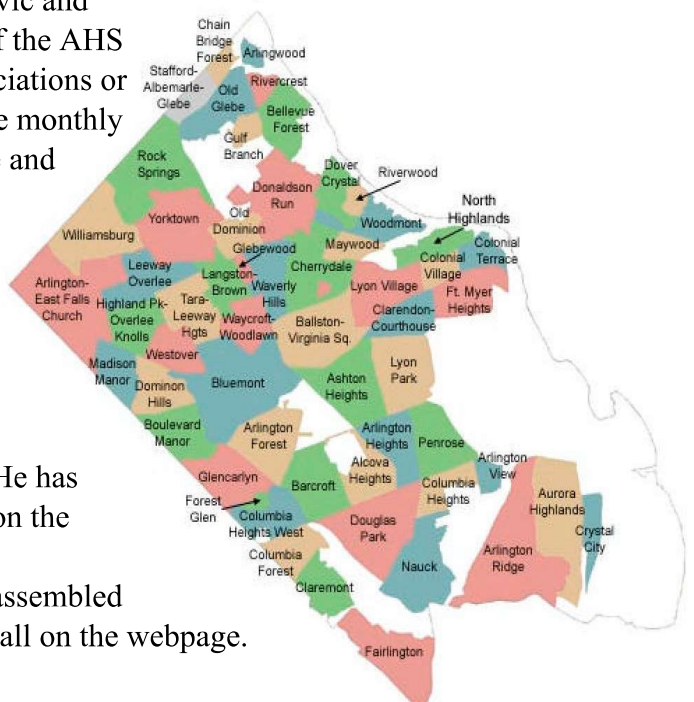
- At the July free public event, Jessica Kaplan discussed the *Memorializing the Enslaved of Arlington* project and highlighted stories from the lives of the enslaved.
- Sean Denniston, presented an update at the main public library on the Bennett v. Garrett lawsuit filed by Clarendon in 1920 to become its own city.
- At the August free monthly event, Sandy Newton discussed historic gardening methods and the roles of the garden at Arlington House.
- The Arlington Historical Museum hosted a special tour of La Petit Academy. Students got to ring the school bell, sit in the recreated school room, tour the museum with docents David Pearson and Jonah Pearson, and have “recess” at the bottom of the hill.
- AHS was at the County Fair at our indoor booth organized by Annette Benbow and Mark Benbow with many volunteers staffing the booth. AHS presented a collection of artifacts, a sample “stumbling stone” and details about the *Memorializing the Enslaved of Arlington* project, a quiz on Arlington history, and the challenge to find your house on a civil-war era map of Arlington, then called Alexandria County.
- At September’s free monthly event, Dr. Emma Voiland-Sanchez shared her immigration story from Bolivia and explained the importance of language, education, community and preservation of cultures and traditions.
- The annual AHS Banquet was held on September 27, with guest speaker, David Rubenstein, a nationally known preservationist of Arlington House, Memorial Bridge, the Washington Monument, and other historic icons.

AHS in Your Neighborhood

Since the beginning of 2023, AHS has been talking to civic and service organizations about what AHS does. Members of the AHS Board of Directors have talked to 19 different civic associations or service groups to let them know about our museums, free monthly events, and online history resources, both on our website and on social media. We’ve let them know about how AHS can provide tips on preserving older homes instead of tearing them down to make them more modern and how we can help them learn more about their home, their neighborhood, and Arlington history.

One of the new resources we’ve been highlighting is “Neighborhood Histories” assembled by Charlie Clark. He has collected the many neighborhood histories and they are on the AHS website <https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/2023/02/neighborhood-histories/> That’s not all! He has also assembled histories of churches and schools and you can find them all on the webpage.

If you would like AHS to talk to your neighborhood, service organization, or other organization in the county, please let us know. We’ll be happy to spread the word about the many things we have going and how we can help our community. If you know of a neighborhood, church, or school history that is available but not on the webpage, please let us know at: info@arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org.





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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's goal is to help build our community through a better understanding of our diverse 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.