



Arlington Historical Society

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Arlington Historical Society

Summer 2024

President's Dispatch

I recently attended the unveiling of a new sign at Fort Ethan Allen Park commemorating the service of the 107th US Colored Troop regiment in the Civil War. This sign is a result of a partnership between Arlington County Department Parks and Recreation and the Civil War Trails organization. The sign also incorporates input from many members of the community including the Arlington Historical Society, the National Park Service, and the Black Heritage Museum of Arlington. The sign is representative of recent developments in our local history.

First, it shows the continuing commitment of the community to develop and share the many stories of Arlington's history. Highlighting the contributions of African American troops in a park that is dedicated to Arlington's place in the Civil War illustrates the importance to broaden the lens through which we tell and interpret history while keeping the stories in context and telling them as part of the broader narrative.

In this spirit, the Arlington Historical Society has embarked on an effort to update our museum exhibits to incorporate the experiences of more Arlingtonians while retaining the focus on the most important historical stories of Arlington. These efforts will include adding content such as "Little Saigon" and the immigration experience as well as incorporating new material to such exhibits as our "African American Experience" exhibit to tell a more complete story of each era.

Second, it shows the County government's continuing and increasing commitment to telling our history. In addition to markers such as this one, the County has recently adopted its updated cultural and historical resources inventory, acquired [The Bottom property](#), committed funds to preserve historic buildings such as the LAC (formerly the Lee Arts Center), entered into a MoU in which the County will place the [Memorializing the Enslaved of Arlington](#) memorials AHS and its partners are developing in the public right of way, and contributed \$25,000 towards the preservation of the Arlington Historical Museum and \$15,000 towards the MoE memorials. We are grateful for the county's efforts and support!

Finally, it represents an increase in interest in rediscovering and telling the stories of places not well known, at least not generally well-known, including The Bottom, Queen City, and Camp Casey. We are excited to see the County's plans for The Bottom, a historically significant property recently acquired by the county from VDOT that we understand will become a park near Chain Bridge and which will be an appropriate accompaniment to last summer's unveiling of *Queen City*, an art installation commemorating another displaced Arlington community. We also hope to see further development of the Camp Casey story, which has been attracting renewed interest recently. These developments and others will help all of us understand the community that we are today.

Have a great summer, and we will see many of you at the Artifact Expo on August 29th (details in this issue)!

David B. Pearson, AHS President

A Tribute to Frank O'Leary

On June 7th, the Arlington Historical Society lost a very dear friend. Francis (Frank) X. O'Leary, a champion of AHS and so many other causes, passed away after battling cancer for the past seven months. He faced his battle with cancer the same way he lived his life as an optimist who believed that barriers could be overcome. His perseverance and energy created a legacy in Arlington, the county that became his home in 1969.

Frank was born in 1943. His father was a career army officer. As a result, Frank grew up in many different locations, graduating from high school when his father was stationed in Germany. Frank attended Georgetown University, earning a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in economic theory. He received a State Department appointment as a Foreign Service Officer. Prior to becoming the treasurer of Arlington County, he served as president of Nova Research Associates.



Frank O'Leary
(Photo courtesy ArlNow)

In 1983, Frank, a member of the Democratic Party, was elected treasurer of Arlington County, Virginia, a position he held for eight terms, retiring in 2014. He was noted for lowering the County's tax delinquency rate from 9% to less than .5%, at the time the lowest rate in Arlington's history. His success as treasurer led to his staff and him receiving numerous awards, including the 1988–1989 Treasurer of the Year Award from the Treasurers' Association of Virginia.

His successful career is legacy enough, but it was equally matched by his service to the community. He loved Arlington and unselfishly gave his time to projects that supported Arlington and its history. He was the founding member and treasurer of the Warren J. Stambaugh Memorial Foundation which provides funding for people with disabilities. He was actively involved in raising funds for the USS Arlington. As a member of the Arlington County WWI Centennial Committee, he led a fundraiser that was largely responsible for financing the commemorative panels at the Clarendon War Memorial. He was a longtime member of the Arlington Optimist Club where he organized speakers and helped manage the yearly Christmas tree fundraiser.

Frank was a special friend to the Arlington Historical Society. He served on the AHS Board and coordinated a tribute to 9/11 at the Army Navy Country Club. He was a champion for the preservation and renovation of the Hume School and worked tirelessly seeking funding for this project. He conducted a fundraiser tribute to Warren G. Stambaugh with the donations helping to fund a feasibility study of the museum building that launched the preservation /renovation project. In 2021, Frank was awarded the Cornelia B. Rose Award by AHS. This award is given to a person who has made a significant contribution to the advancement of history in Arlington County.

Frank was a force of nature. He loved his wife Linda and his family and especially enjoyed spending time with them and going on trips together. He had a large circle of friends and enjoyed meeting for lunch and regaling them with regular emails about his election predictions. He enjoyed sitting with friends watching the Commanders (Redskins) football team and hosting parties on his deck. He mentored many leaders in the county and was always available for a conversation. He will be missed greatly but his legacy will live on through his family and all the love and effort he spent making Arlington a better place to live.

Upcoming AHS Events

Thursday, July 11, 2024, 7:00 pm
Revolutionary Arlington



to free parking at <https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/events>.)

Our county and our country will be celebrating the nation's 250 founding. Local historian, Kevin Vincent, will set the stage for the role that our area played during the Revolution. Back then, we were part of Fairfax County and would soon become part of Washington, D.C. Our forebears had an outsized role in our nation's founding. Our speaker will lay the groundwork for us before upcoming commemorative events throughout our county highlight our nation's successes, failures, and challenges. (Virtual on Zoom AND in-person at Marymount University Library Auditorium, FREE. See details on Zoom registration and directions

Friday, August 16 – Sunday, August 18, 2024
AHS is at the County Fair



AHS has an indoor booth from Friday at 4 pm through Sunday at 7 pm. Stop by and say hello, take a local history quiz and win a prize; try to find your home on an 1865 map; and learn more about local history, AHS, and about our museums and research and service projects. (Thomas Jefferson Community Center, 3501 2nd St, South)

Thursday, August 29, 2024, 7:00 pm
Artifact Expo Night



AHS is celebrating its artifact collection and all the volunteers who have been working to preserve it all. View selected artifacts not on display at the Arlington Historical Museum and learn why each tells a unique Arlington story. Learn how AHS preserves artifacts and how you can protect your own heirlooms. Meet devoted AHS volunteers who are caring for these precious historic treasures. Refreshments, sweets, and libations. Tickets to AHS members available now; tickets to the public will be available in August. (Women's Club of Arlington, 700 South Buchanan Street.)

Thursday, September 12, 2024, 7:00 pm
The Unitarian Church's Role in Desegregation



How far did some Arlington churches go to fight segregation? Many joined African American clergy in speaking out and standing up for civil rights. The Unitarian Universalist Church was one such church. Find out what spurred this mostly white congregation to action in an account by member Bill Fogarty. (Virtual on Zoom AND in-person at Marymount University Library Auditorium, FREE. See details on Zoom registration and directions to free parking at <https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/events>.)

Partnering with the County for the Memorializing the Enslaved Project



[Memorializing the Enslaved in Arlington](#) is proud to announce that the Arlington County Board has approved the Memorandum of Agreement regarding the placement of "Stumbling Stone" markers as memorials to the enslaved people in Arlington in the Public Right of Way. These markers are based on German *Stolpersteine* that commemorate Holocaust victims.

This fall, students at Arlington Tech High School will make 15 stumbling stones to be placed at locations of enslavement throughout the county. Stay tuned for more on this exciting collaboration between Arlington Historical Society, the Black Heritage Museum of Arlington, Arlington County, and Arlington Public Schools.

Example of a stumbling stone for Isaac Jones, who was enslaved by Anthony Frazier in Green Valley.

Save Yourself Some Time and the Arlington Historical Society Some Money!

Most AHS memberships (except for Life members and members who joined March 2023 or later) are due for renewal **June 30, 2024**. If you haven't renewed yet, save yourself and AHS time and 68 cents by renewing online now (and if you have renewed already, thank you!!). 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!

Thank you to our business and organization members for their continued support!

John Marshall Bank

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MTFA

Fairlington Historical Society

Questers Patowmack Seekers Chapter

Stewardship of Your Money

AHS depends on membership fees to allow us to carry out our mission. AHS has continued to take care to use your financial donations to continue to improve our community by building knowledge of our diverse history. Recently, our expenditures have centered around our two museums:

- Display items and supplies for the seasonal reopening of the Ball-Sellers House.
- Windows preservation expenses at the Arlington Historical Museum
- Two-year umbrella insurance premiums for AHS
- Display materials for the Arlington Historical Museum

SAVE THE DATE

AHS Artifact Expo Night: August 29th, 2024

Have you ever wondered about artifacts held by AHS that are not on display at the Arlington Historical Museum? Here's your opportunity to see some of them and learn why each tells an Arlington story. Our museum collection volunteers will be on hand to discuss how AHS preserves its artifacts and how you can preserve artifacts of your own.

Join us as the Arlington Historical Society gathers at the Women's Club of Arlington on **Thursday, August 29th** and enjoy light appetizers and sweets, and wine, beer and soda. Tickets are on sale to members now—For tickets, visit <https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/campaigns/artifact-expo/>. We hope you will join us and enjoy this unique event! For more information, please contact Jessica Kaplan, Artifact Expo Co-Chair at AHSedlink@gmail.com.

Virginia Passes Landmark Preservation Law

This year, the Virginia General Assembly passed HB 1395, a bill that provides the filing of a building permit or demolition application shall stay a locality from issuing any permit to raze or demolish a historic landmark, building, or structure until 30 days after the rendering of the final decision of the governing body of the locality pursuant to a historic preservation ordinance. The bill was championed by Delegate Patrick Hope (Arlington) in response to the demolition of the historic Febrey-Lothrop Estate in the Upton Hill neighborhood of Arlington. The Febrey home was built before the Civil War and became the residence of several prominent individuals including Alvin Lothrop, co-founder of Woodward & Lothrop Department Store, Howard Hughes, and developer, Randolph Rouse and his wife, actress Audrey Meadows of Honeymooners fame.

The original bill included a provision that would have allowed certain parties to appeal to the circuit court the decision of the governing body to raze or demolish a historic landmark, building, or structure. Unfortunately, that provision was rejected by the Senate. Current law requires the governing body to pass by ordinance the parties entitled to appeal a final decision of the governing body for review. Arlington's ordinance only permits the owner or the developer to appeal the County Board's decision.

The legislation will go into effect July 1 and represents an important step forward in finding a better balance between preserving historically important structures in our community with development needs and benefits.

Eagle Scout Project at Ball Sellers House

I am Finn Cupples, a 16-year old sophomore at Washington-Liberty High School and a member of Boy Scout Troop 647. As I aspire to become an Eagle Scout, one of the requirements is to organize and complete a service project in the community. I learned that the Ball Sellers House vegetable garden was in need of a fence to expand the garden. Working with Jessica Kaplan, I looked into the Arlington Historical Society and found that all the food from the garden helps support Arlington Friends of Urban Agriculture, Plot Against Hunger Program. I knew it was the perfect project for me.



Finn (right) and his dad, in front of the finished garden fence.

After planning and working with Ms. Kaplan, I came up with a plan to extend the garden eight feet on both sides, doubling the garden space. With help from 26 volunteers across the community and my troop, we got to work on June 1st. On the first day of the project, we did most of the work, setting the posts and rails, making a great base to put the finishing touches on the next day. I am happy my project will support the community, the Ball Sellers House and the Plot Against Hunger Program.

While carefully digging the holes for the posts, we set aside the dirt on tarps. Archaeologist Patrick O'Neill and his volunteer crew found small items such as pottery shards, butchered bone, and pieces of handmade bricks. These will be added to the AHS collection.

Washington-Liberty Senior Experience at the Ball-Sellers House

My name is Layla Johnson and I am a, now graduated, senior at Washington-Liberty High School. With my fellow student—also now graduated—Matteo Hope, we researched, wrote, and produced a play called *Around the Hearth* about the Ball-Sellers House. This was part of our “Senior Experience,” a project requirement to graduate from WLHS.

It all started when Matteo asked me, “Hey, do you want to help me write a play about the oldest house in Arlington?” Matteo and I have been good friends since 6th grade at Kenmore Middle School, which is why, on that fateful day, I said, “Okay!” That started a nearly two-year project of researching, writing, and directing *Around the Hearth*. I very quickly realized how much research this play would require... so I started reading.

I only knew about the Ball-Sellers House peripherally, since it was near Kenmore. As I dug into the house’s history, I became intrigued by how the house has morphed to fit the needs of the people who inhabited it—this was the story I wanted to tell. *The House that John Built*, by Martha Beggs Orth, was an incredible, comprehensive resource for me, and it formed the play’s skeleton. As I wrote, I did my own research, meticulously adding to a document that grew to over 40 pages of bullet points with 150 footnotes. Writing the script was challenging. Using historical facts meant that I had a lot of material to work with, but it was also limited plausible storylines. I couldn’t use this or that character in a scene, for example, because they were already dead. I plunged down many rabbit holes, spending Saturday nights poring over the 1880 Census or an 18th century inventory. Some of these trails would dead-end in missing records, but I always hoped for the satisfaction of uncovering exactly what I needed to find.

I’m Matteo Hope. My dad is a part of the historical society and has always been fascinated by the Ball-Sellers House. I grew up going there practically once a year and I always found it interesting but I only thought of it as just a really old house. A year or so ago, my dad suggested I write a play about the house. I was hesitant. None of the people who lived in the house were super crucial to history. Or so I thought. I had just finished a play project with Layla, one of the best writers I know, when she agreed we got to work.

The story of this house was so much more than I had imagined. All of these people impacted history in their own way and more importantly, represented the history of the nation and Arlington County at the time. And they were just “regular” people. None of them were people who would be in our history books, which made them relatable to an audience and each reflected what life was like during their time period. After



The cast of "Around the Hearth" with Matteo and Layla (right) holding flowers.

Layla’s intense research, I knew we had a great idea on our hands. While she handled most of the writing, most of the staging was up to me. I’ve only directed a few shows, and getting it done in under two weeks was a challenge. I am extremely proud of what we produced. So many people came up to me after the show to say how fascinating and inspiring the piece was. They learned so much. I hope to take this play somewhere, maybe Broadway is too big of a reach, but I can confidently say, this will not be the end of *Around the Hearth*.

We were both impressed with the enthusiasm and dedication which our fellow student actors brought to the script. They found hidden meanings and moments of humor I hadn’t even realized were there. On June 5th, the night of the play, the cast of students brought life to this history and showed that this house still lives on. John and Elizabeth Ball would have never expected this, but I hope they’d be proud of us.

[This fall, Layla will be attending Oberlin College and plans to do a double-major in creative writing and biology, with a minor in history. Matteo Hope will be attending George Mason University.]

AHS in Our Community

AHS shares our diverse history in our community often and for many groups. Here's what we've been up to since our last newsletter:

- March 15: AHS Vice President, Sean Denniston spoke to the National Landing BID on Queen City.
- March 27: AHS President David Pearson spoke to the Bluemont Civic Association about AHS projects.
- April 5: Museum Director, Dr. Mark Benbow represented AHS at the DC History Conference community history fair.
- April 6: BSH Opened the 2024 season with performances of colonial era music by the Monumental City Ancient Fife and Drum Corps and then the Guillotine Theatre Group.
- April 7: Living History Day at Fort C.F. Smith with re-enactors and AHS artifact exhibits.
- April 9: Annette Benbow spoke about AHS and the Arlington VA250 planning to the Daughters of the American Revolution, Thomas Nelson Chapter.
- April 11: Marty Suydam spoke at the AHS free monthly lecture about the Rambler, a local reporter who covered local sites of interest and captured history.
- April 11: Karl VanNewkirk's Encore local history class toured the Ball-Sellers House.
- April 24: AHS representatives read to toddlers at George Mason University's Mason Square
- April 27: Kevin Vincent guided the George Washington's Forest History Walking Tour.
- April 28: AHS co-hosted "A Conversation with Joan Mulholland" at Mt. Olivet UMC, with St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Challenging Racism, and the Black Heritage Museum of Arlington
- May 8: Ball-Sellers House docent, Annette Benbow, gave a tour to the staff of Alexandria's Carlyle House.
- May 9: AHS hosted author Michael Lee Pope at the free monthly lecture on his book "Shotgun Justice."
- April 19: Vice President Sean Denniston spoke at the dedication of the renamed: Charlie Clark Memorial Center for Local History at the public library.
- June 1: AHS representatives brought history to the Drew Day annual festival at the Charles Drew Elementary School.
- June 1: Ball-Sellers House volunteers helped Glencarlyn celebrate Heritage Day by walking in their parade and providing free tours during the Glencarlyn House Tour
- June 5: President David Pearson spoke to the Leeway Overlee Civic Association about AHS.
- June 8: AHS representatives brought history to Arlington View Community Day.
- June 8: AHS representatives brought history and the [Memorializing the Enslaved project](#) to the Tinner ill Music Festival
- June 13: Ball-Sellers House docent, Sandy Newton gave a group tour to the Rock Spring Garden Club, which takes care of some of the house's historic flower gardens.
- June 13: AHS hosted Roger Mola for "A Window Seat to Arlington's Riverfront" in the monthly free lecture series.
- June 19: AHS co-hosted and helped bring local history to the Arlington Community Juneteenth Celebration with fellow hosts: NAACP, Challenging Racism, Black Heritage Museum of Arlington and the Arlington Coalition of Black Clergy.

Do You Have the App?



Want to have stories of our shared history at your fingertips wherever you go? Get the app! "Arlington Historical" available for free wherever you get your cell phone apps. This is a fun place to read about stories of our history or go on your own tour with the Tours section identifying the actual location where they took place. Credit our Vice-President Peter Vaselopoulos for this 21st century way to view our history. You can visit it online at <https://arlingtonhistorical.com>



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**The Arlington Historical Society strives to build a stronger community by sharing stories of
our diverse history.**

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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. and are open to the public.