



The Arlington Historical Society Spring 2025 Newsletter



President's Dispatch

It is happening! We are reopening the Arlington Historical Museum on May 3rd with all new exhibits! We'll finally stop talking about window preservation (for now; the work needs to be done about every 50 years, so watch this space in 2075!). Not only are all the exhibits new, but you also will be able to rediscover parts of the museum that have been off limits to the public in recent years—especially in the new “community space” on the 2nd floor. We hope you enjoy the “new” museum!

This year we celebrate 50 years of owning the Ball-Sellers House, the c.1750 farmhouse that we have preserved as a free museum. We hope you can join us as we reopen it for the season with the first of many fun programs on April 5th! We are also preparing it for its star turn during the celebrations of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

AHS continues to bring local history to the community. Based on substantial research—available on our website—the Memorializing the Enslaved of Arlington project, in partnership with the Black Heritage Museum of Arlington, has engaged both our public schools and county government in manufacturing and placing “stumbling stones.” We share stories of the enslaved on social media, in presentations by request to community groups, lesson plans in schools, newsletter updates, and with a new exhibit in the Arlington Historical Museum. Last month, hundreds of people attended the dedication of three of these markers on Little Falls Road. New announcements for future unveilings are on the way.

This is the model of what AHS can do and we believe recent events show the value of preserving and promoting the education of local history. Our museums serve as great focal points, but we plan to turn them into more dynamic spaces, with more programming and events. We also seek to expand the presence of local history stories in the community, both physically and in the digital realm to reach new demographic groups.

We have accomplished great things as an all-volunteer organization but we believe that to expand our presence, we need a small paid staff which we expect initially to be part-time. We also need to expand our volunteer base, as we will need new ideas, fresh energy, multiple connections, and AHS ambassadors in the community. So we are introducing an Advisory Board to complement the Board of Directors which will continue to oversee the operations of the AHS.

This is my last *President's Dispatch*, as AHS will have a new president in May. Thank you for all your support these last two years! I will still be around as the chair of the Advisory Board, the Docent Coordinator (and Docent) of the Arlington Historical Museum, and serving on the AHS Museum Committee. I hope to see you at the museum and at AHS events!

David B. Pearson, AHS President

The Arlington Historical Museum Reopens May 3rd Rediscover Our History!

Come rediscover our local history at the Arlington Historical Museum! After closing last summer for preservation and renovation work, we reopen on May 3rd at 10:00 AM with the debut of all-new exhibits and the opportunity to meet Barbara Noe Kennedy, author of "100 Things to Do in Arlington Before You Die" (You can leave the museum with just 99 left!).

The exhibits tell new stories uncovered about Arlington's past and built on much of the history we have always shared. You'll see Arlington history from the time of Native peoples through the thriving multicultural community it is today. One new exhibit AHS is proud to introduce is the Memorializing the Enslaved exhibit highlighting the special research project that has shed light on the lives of enslaved individuals who lived and labored in Arlington, honoring their contributions and resilience. Through historical records, artifacts, and personal stories, the project and the exhibit seek to ensure that their voices are acknowledged and remembered as part of Arlington's complex history.

But that's not all! The museum shows new views and artifacts of its farming past, its role in the formation of Civil War US Colored Troops and the defense of Washington. You'll get a new appreciation of our leading role in the nation's history of transportation, communications, and businesses as well as a new perspective on where we've been and where we are now.

We've also opened space on the second floor for use as an education center, community gathering room, and a place to feature revolving exhibits, including those co-curated with community groups! This will be a dynamic part of the museum, where you will be able to attend events on special topics, and view exhibits told in the voices of the groups presenting them. To kick start what the second floor can be, AHS, in celebration of the Ball-Sellers House 50th Anniversary, is presenting an illustrated history of this c. 1750 farmhouse highlighting its colonial builders through today as the story of the history of all of Arlington.

Visit us at the Arlington Historical Museum for the big reveal! The museum is in the oldest existing schoolhouse at 1805 S. Arlington Ridge Road. It's free and the parking is free.

Rediscover Arlington's history!



Shop At Our Online Museum Store

Our museum store is online. You can get stationary, maps, books, and more. Visit us online at <https://arlhist.org/shop/> and don't forget to use your 10% member discount.



Notice to Members of AHS Annual Meeting

The Arlington Historical Society will hold its annual meeting of members on Thursday, May 8, 2025, at 7:00 pm. The meeting will be held BOTH on Zoom and in person at the Reinsch Library Auditorium on the main campus of Marymount University. If you plan to attend by Zoom, please register at this link: <https://forms.gle/UGEVTB3hCpfViSc98>

The business portion of the meeting, when next year's officers and other directors will be elected, is expected to be short. It will be followed by a presentation titled Arlington Defenses: **Early Days of the Civil War Defenses of Washington** with Bryan Cheeseboro. Further information can be found on AHS's website at: <https://arlhist.org/event/early-days-of-the-civil-war-defenses/>

The AHS Board has voted to amend Article V, Paragraph 3 of the By-Laws to contemplate the implementation of the Advisory Board by adding the words "an Advisory Board and", so the Paragraph now reads as follows:

*The President, with the approval of the Board of Directors, may establish **an Advisory Board and** such other temporary or permanent committees as are necessary.*

The Nominating Committee intends to nominate the following for election as officers and directors at the meeting:

Officers

President: Peter Vaselopulos
Vice President: Sean Denniston
Treasurer: Richard Samp
Secretary: Harry Evans

Members of the Board of Directors

George Axiotis
Bethany Baker
Annette Benbow
Jessica Kaplan
Andy McLeod
Annette Scherber
Martin Suydam

In addition, the AHS Board intends to announce the composition of the initial AHS Advisory Board at the meeting. At this time, the following individuals are anticipated to be named to the Advisory Board. We are also approaching other candidates for this board.

Advisory Board

David Pearson (Chair)
Catherine Aselford
Duke Banks
Dr. Mark Benbow
Sue Eisenfeld

Sunny Evans
Cathy Hix
Patrick Hope
Michael Schaffner
Dale Smith

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VA250 Update

The Arlington Historical Society provides leadership for the Arlington VA250 Committee. This group includes representatives from dozens of community and service organizations, the performing arts, and many more that seek assistance in event planning for VA250 programs. AHS board members Sean Denniston and Peter Vaselopulos are co-chairs and met with representatives last month.

Planning has started for 2026 county-wide signature events, including a visit of the VA250 mobile museum and a history festival. For more information about VA250, visit the state website <https://va250.org/> or email us at arlingtonva250@gmail.com

Eagle Scout Projects at Both AHS Museums

AHS has benefitted greatly from two recent Eagle Scout Projects. Tyler Harry of Arlington's Scout Troop 164, produced two display cases for the newly redesigned Arlington Historical Museum. Beginning in November 2024, Tyler coordinated with Museum Director Bethany Baker to design, construct, and install the display cases.

The original design called for one large case, 8 feet wide, 6 feet tall, and 2 feet deep. But Tyler and Bethany agreed that two smaller cases, 4 feet wide, would be better for the new look of the museum. Tyler did all of the project planning, including design research, organizing a team to do the actual construction, and final delivery in February.

Connor Jones of Arlington's Scout Troop 647 built four wooden benches for the Ball-Sellers House. He and his team also built a new historic-looking kitchen table for inside the museum, and Connor refurbished the two existing benches to remove the moss and lichen on them. Now they look just like the new benches.

Requirements for Eagle Scout projects include planning the project, coordinating with the recipient, organizing and managing a team, raising money for the project, communicating with donors and experts, and in Connor's case, also doing research on the best wood to use to make outdoor benches that will last, and even historic research to identify a historically appropriate style for the benches and the table. Special thanks to J. B. Jones Electric for significant donations of materials.



Tyler Harry (at left) from Scout Troop 164, delivering one of his new display cases to the Arlington Historical Museum.



Encourage Your Friends and Neighbors to Become AHS Members This Month

Do you know someone who loves Arlington history but isn't yet an AHS member? Encourage them to purchase a membership today! This month, folks who purchase an annual membership to AHS will receive two months of additional membership, free! Share the AHS link to our membership application: <https://arlhist.org/support/join/>

- An annual membership for an individual is only \$35.
- All members receive a monthly email about local history events in Arlington, a quarterly newsletter, and an annual magazine of articles about Arlington.
- Members also receive a discount on purchases at our museum gift shop and online bookstore and discounts for ticketed events.
- Sponsor members at the \$100 level also receive a NARM card which grants them free admission and shop discounts at 1000+ cultural institutions.

Partnering with the County to Memorialize the Enslaved



On March 15th, AHS and the Black Heritage Museum of Arlington unveiled the second set of three “Stumbling Stones” commemorating the lives of the enslaved people who helped build our County. These brass markers honor Margaret, George, and Charlotte Hyson, and the ceremony was attended by approximately 300 people, including many descendants of the Hyson’s (see photo below).

These markers are embedded in the sidewalk at the northeast corner of Little Falls Road and Harrison Street. They were designed and fabricated by the students at Arlington Tech of Arlington Public Schools and installed by the Arlington County Department of Environmental Services, who also provided helpful advice on the design.

The three stumbling stones join the first three placed at Ball-Sellers House in 2023 which launching the effort to place them throughout the county to honor the enslaved individuals. In the coming months, more markers will be placed in the sidewalks at the last known location where enslaved people lived in Arlington. The project’s research has revealed over 2750 enslaved people with 1050 identified by name.

The Memorializing the Enslaved in Arlington projects shines a light on these early Americans who contributed so much to the economic, social, and cultural development of our county. More information is on the AHS website at:

<https://arlhist.org/enslavement/> or email Jessica Kaplan at ahsedlink@gmail.com



The three enslaved who were honored last month were **Margaret Hyson** (ca. 1825-1891), **George Hyson** (ca 1851-1900), and **Charlotte Hyson** (1853-1921) who were enslaved by William and Catherine Minor. From 1803 through the Civil War, their 110-acre farm, “Springfield,” encompassed a portion of what is now the Yorktown neighborhood. When William Minor died in 1859, 29 enslaved men, women, and children were part of his estate. The Hysons were likely freed by the Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863. They eventually settled in the Hall’s Hill/High View Park community of Arlington where their descendants still live today.

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

John Marshall Bank

JBG Smith Cares

Fairlington Historical Society

Marymount University

MTFA

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Upcoming AHS Events

For more details: visit: <https://arlhist.org/events>

Saturday, April 5, 2025 from 1-4 pm

Ball-Sellers House Opening Day with Colonial Music Group Bedlam

We begin celebrating the 50th Anniversary of AHS receiving the donation of the oldest house in the county from Marian Sellers in 1975. We'll celebrate with colonial era musicians, *Bedlam*, who performs at 1:30 and 3:00 pm. Singers and musicians will perform music from early America including upbeat songs to lift colonial morale, ballads commemorating heroes and battles, and even love songs. Bring a chair or a blanket for yourself. Colonial sweet treats and free tours of the house. *(In-person, FREE at 5620 3rd St., South, details at <https://arlhist.org/events>)*



Sunday, April 6, 2025 @ 3 pm

Memorializing the Enslaved in Arlington: Dedication of Two Enslaved

AHS and the Black Heritage Museum of Arlington invite you to the dedication ceremony of "Stumbling Stones" or bronze markers commemorating the lives of the enslaved people who helped build our county (and our country). We will be commemorating Humphrey Albert: Born ca. 1841, and Priscilla Willis: Born ca. 1852. Join us as we celebrate and honor Humphrey and Priscilla and gain a greater understanding of Arlington's complicated past. Brief remarks will be offered. *(In-person, at the northwest corner of Key Boulevard and Highland Street)*



Thursday, April 10, 2025 @ 7 pm

Who Owns the Potomac and Why?

Why is the boundary between Virginia and Maryland on the Potomac River so odd? It is not in the middle of the river, like it is in most places, and it doesn't follow the curves of either shoreline. Michael Nardolilli, the Executive Director of the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin will explain the weird history behind Arlington's boundary along the Potomac River. *(In Person at the Marymount University Library Auditorium AND on Zoom, FREE. See details about Zoom registration and directions to free parking at <https://arlhist.org/events>)*



Saturday, April 19, 2025 from 10 – 3 pm

Spring Celebration with the Glencarlyn Community Garden

We're partnering with the Glencarlyn Library Garden to celebrate colonial gardening. Tour the c.1750 farmhouse and learn from gardeners how colonial Virginians grew and used their garden produce. See our colonial garden, our model beehives, and a modern rain garden at work. Practice with a quern or a mortar and pestle to grind grain or corn like our ancestors did. *(In-person at 2 locations: Ball-Sellers House at 5620 3rd St., South AND at the Glencarlyn Library at 300 S. Kensington St. South, FREE)*



Saturday, May 3, 2025 from 10 am – 4 pm

Grand Reopening of the Arlington Historical Museum

After a yearlong renovation, the Arlington Historical Museum, housed in the historic Hume School (built in 1891), will reopen. The museum will feature all-new exhibits under the theme **Rediscovering History**. AHS is thrilled to invite the community to visit and explore the new exhibits spotlighting Arlington's fascinating past. *(In-person at 1805 South Arlington Ridge Road, FREE)*



Thursday, May 8, 2025 from 7 pm – 7:15 pm

Arlington Historical Society Annual Member Meeting

Before our monthly history presentation, we'll have a brief members' meeting to approve changes to AHS board structure and the 2025 slate of board members. Read details elsewhere in this AHS Spring Newsletter.

We'd love to see you in-person at the Marymount Library Auditorium, but if you can't make it in person, your registration for Zoom access will also enable you to attend and vote virtually via Zoom. *(In Person at the Marymount University Library Auditorium AND on Zoom. See details about Zoom registration and directions to free parking at <https://arhist.org/events>)*



Thursday, May 8, 2025 at 7:15 pm (Immediately follows brief members meeting)

Early Days of the Civil War Defenses of Washington: From Fort Sumter to First Bull Run

Arlington was key to the defenses of Washington during the Civil War.

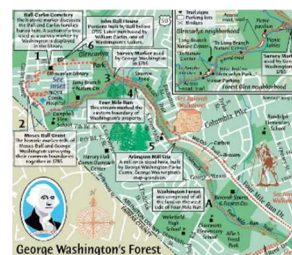
Bryan Cheeseboro will describe the threats to the Capital City that spurred building the ring of defenses—both inside DC and in Virginia. He'll also explain where the forts were built and the fear and danger to the Capital City after the abysmal US Army defeat at the Battle of First Bull Run. *(In Person at the Marymount University Library Auditorium AND on Zoom. See details about Zoom registration and directions to free parking at <https://arhist.org/events>)*



Saturday, May 10, 2025 @ 1 pm

George Washington's Forest Walking Tour

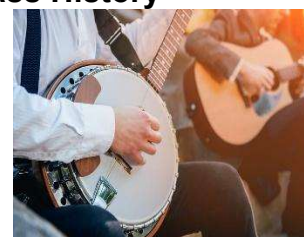
Walk in the footsteps of George Washington on a guided walking tour with local historian, Kevin Vincent. In 1775, George Washington bought 1200-acres of forest in what is now Arlington. After the Revolutionary War, he returned home and surveyed his property. You'll start with a tour of the Ball-Sellers House (a c.1750 farmhouse), visit survey markers used by Washington in 1785, historic springs, the site of a mill built by George Washington's step-grandson, and more. *(Starts at the Ball-Sellers House, 5620 3rd Street, South See details at <https://arhist.org/events>)*



Thursday, June 12, 2025 @ 7 pm (In-Person Only)

Can't You Hear Me Calling: Tales and Tunes from Arlington's Bluegrass History

A panel discussion with musical interludes with Don Rusnak and Randy Barrett (of Bluegrass Country Radio) and more hosted by local music scholar and bluegrass fan, Zachary Youcha. Find out about the roots of unique American music genre and why Arlington was key to the growth Bluegrass. *(In Person ONLY at the Marymount University Library Auditorium. See details and directions to free parking at <https://arhist.org/events>)*



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Do You Have the App?

Want to have stories of our shared history at your fingertips wherever you go? Get the "Arlington Historical" app. It's free from 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 in the Tours section identifying the location where the stories 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.**

**Visit AHS online or in-person**

Website: [arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org](http://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org)  
Email: [info@arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org)

**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.