



NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 58, NO. 4 DECEMBER 2013

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Fellow AHS Members:

Almost half of our program year is over, and I am happy to say that AHS has a number of accomplishments that bode well for our future level of activity, as well as exciting initiatives in the planning stage. Above all, AHS is reaching out to a wide variety of audiences in order to tell Arlington’s story. Our programs are geared to supporting Arlington schools, minorities and neighborhoods. Accomplishments so far this year include the following:

- A successful, well-publicized high student historical essay contest and initiation of the second year’s contest in conjunction with the Arlington public schools
- Support to Arlington Magazine’s Nov-Dec issue featuring Arlington history that included a feature article by our museum director, major input on the Arlington history timeline, and website inclusion of the texts of the two winning student essays (see above)
- Development of a working relationship with WETA, including a filmed interview of an AHS director in conjunction with the “Latinos USA” national series and other projects in the works
- Sponsoring two successful lecture programs at central library
- Manning AHS information tables at three community events
- Engagement with the Nauck Community in its campaign to preserve and protect its rich neighborhood history.

AHS projects in the planning stage include an innovative “Arlington Passport” history project requiring students to visit a number of historically significant sites in Arlington in order to have their “passport” stamped and a certificate awarded. Our 2014 programs will include quality lectures as well as more active programs for younger people and families. We are working with a state of Virginia photographer to make professional slide shows of either Ball-Sellers House, Hume School or both. We have initiated work on the first ever African-American permanent exhibit at the Hume School, as well as a display on the USS Arlington, named for the 9/11 Pentagon tragedy and heroic first-responder actions.

Please see Letter from the president, page 2

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HOLIDAY EXHIBIT

“Season’s Greetings From Arlington: Christmas Cards & Ornaments To Decorate The Holidays: 1920-1940” will be on display through Jan. 19, 2014. Visit the Arlington Historical Museum to check it out!

WANT TO SHARE NEWS ABOUT AHS?

The Arlington Historical Society is seeking a newsletter editor. Responsibilities include soliciting articles from the AHS board of directors, editing, proofreading, publishing and mailing a quarterly 8-page newsletter. Occasional writing also required.

Interested volunteers should contact AHS President John Richardson at 703-534-3577 or johnjoyce2@verizon.net.

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We also plan to organize workshops in which neighborhood history activists can learn practical techniques to gather, preserve and protect their historical resources.

None of this activity can be undertaken without cost, however, and we encourage everyone to help support our efforts. The simplest means of doing so is via the AHS website: www.arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org.

Thanks for your support, and Happy Holidays!

John P. Richardson

johnjoyce2@verizon.net

703-534-3577

AHS EVENTS CALENDAR

Save these dates for exciting Arlington Historical Society programs next year. And check out our regularly updated calendar on the AHS website for information on AHS programs, as well as other area events of historical interest.

[www.arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/
events-calendar](http://www.arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/events-calendar)

JANUARY

Membership Winter Social

Jan. 11, 4 p.m.

AHS Hume School, 1805 S Arlington Ridge Rd.

FEBRUARY

AHS Public Program

Feb. 13, 7 p.m.

Arlington Central Library, 1015 N. Quincy St.

Nancy Perry will speak about Queen City, one of the first African-American settlements in Arlington.

MARCH

AHS Public Program

March 13, 7 p.m., Arlington Central Library

"Arlington's Development: How Maps Help Us Understand History" by Don Alexander Hawkins

APRIL

AHS Public Program TBD

April 10, 7 p.m., Arlington Central Library

DO YOU HAVE AN IDEA?

AHS wants to hear from you!

Next year we will commemorate the 150th anniversary of Arlington National Cemetery (June 15), as well as the bicentennial of the Burning of Washington and the hiding of the Declaration of Independence near Chain Bridge (Aug. 24).

Volunteer program coordinator **Jen Jablonsky** is filling the 2014 calendar with fun, engaging public programs. Do you have an idea for a lecture topic or history-related program? Let us know!

www.arlingtonhistory.org/contact

NEW AHS MEETING SPACE

The AHS Board of Directors has found a meeting place – right in its own home, the Arlington Historical Museum.

After months of searching for a room large enough and table space adequate for the 12-person AHS board, the board has now achieved that objective by making use of a large workroom on the second floor of the museum.

The workroom has been used in recent times for display creation and repair and for incidental storage. As a boardroom, it has a spartan appearance consistent with the new board's businesslike approach to the work of AHS.

So we have a highly functional board of directors meeting room, no longer forced to squeeze around a small oval table downstairs.



Photo courtesy of Garrett Peck

The AHS Board of Directors now meets in a space created on the second floor of the Arlington Historical Museum.

HISTORY IN A NUTSHELL: ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

Compiled by Garrett Peck, AHS board of directors

Arlington National Cemetery was established by order of Union Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs on June 15, 1864.

In the 1870s, Meigs built a mile-long boundary wall surrounding the cemetery and McClellan Gate, all made from Seneca red sandstone – the same material used for the Smithsonian Castle. Please mark your calendar as AHS commemorates the cemetery’s 150th anniversary in 2014. See details on page 7.



Above: McClellan Gate.

Left: Boundary wall surrounding Arlington National Cemetery.

NEWS & NOTES ON ARLINGTON HISTORY

AHS FEATURED IN TRAVEL ARTICLE

The Arlington Historical Society and the Ball-Sellers House were mentioned in an Arlington travel article in *Getaways for Grownups*, an online magazine featuring travel ideas for adults. Read the article:

<http://getawaysforgrownups.com/monumental-arlington-county-virginia>

NEW HISTORIC PRESERVATION COORDINATOR IN ARLINGTON

Cynthia Liccese-Torres was named the new Historic Preservation Program Coordinator for Arlington County, succeeding **Michael Leventhal**, who retired earlier this year. Arlington Historical Society board member **Gerry LaPorte**, the society’s corresponding secretary, called Liccese-Torres’ appointment “a major event for Arlington’s historical affairs community.”

“I am very excited about this opportunity,” Liccese-Torres

wrote in an email. “I look forward to our continued collaborations as we work together to promote history and preservation.”

Read more about historic preservation efforts in Arlington:

<http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/cphd/ons/cphdonshistoricpreservation.aspx>

FORMER AHS PRESIDENT SPEAKS

Former AHS President Ruth Rose spoke on AHS and Arlington history Sept. 28 in McLean to the Questers, an international philanthropic group whose local chapter supports Arlington House.

IN THE NEXT NEWSLETTER

Ron Beavers’ Nov. 14 presentation, “The History of the Alexandria, Hampshire, and Loudon RR,” will be covered in the next AHS newsletter.

CENTER FOR LOCAL HISTORY GETS DONATION, ORAL HISTORY

By Judy Knudsen, Manager, Center for Local History at Arlington Public Library

In October, Center for Local History (formerly the Virginia Room) staff member **John Stanton** and I attended the Oral History Association Conference in Oklahoma City. Oklahoma City is also the home of **George M. Richardson**, the last principal of Hoffman-Boston when it was a segregated school. Richardson turned 100 this year, and I was put in contact with him by a former student who had visited him earlier in the year. She told me she thought he had important papers that should be in our archives, and the coincidence of the conference being held there this year was too good an opportunity to pass up!

Between conference sessions we visited with Richardson and his wife to identify the material that he was going to donate and also to do an oral history with him. We had a interesting visit and eventually packed up the material and made arrangements to have it shipped back to the library. Once it is processed the collection will be known as the *George M. Richardson Collection* and will undoubtedly be a rich resource for future researchers.

Richardson is incredibly sharp and this was a wonderful opportunity to not only receive an important donation but to do an oral history that would help capture his life and work. He was very active in the community, as well as the school, and particularly involved in the neighborhood conservation and improvement of Arlington View.

Watch for: A digital exhibit on Virginia postcards in the near future.

AHS SUPPORTS NAUCK COMMUNITY AND CIVIC PRIDE DAY

AHS participated in the Sept. 21 Nauck Community and Civic Pride Day, manning a literature table and greeting visitors interested in AHS. Working with **Portia Clark** of the Nauck community, AHS shared table space with **Judy Knudsen** of Central Library's Center for Local History. AHS president **John Richardson** and communications director **Garrett Peck** shared table duties. The program, held on the grounds of Drew Model School in Nauck, was a great success, with numerous exhibitors and visitors. **Dr. Alfred Taylor**, dean of Nauck history, was on hand, as was **Jackie Smith**, principal of Drew School. Richardson has agreed to serve on Dr. Taylor's Advisory Committee in support of a grant proposal to the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities to publish a Nauck community history.

Do you know of an upcoming community day? Let AHS know – we're happy to participate in events such as these that strengthen neighborhoods.



Garrett Peck at Nauck Community and Civic Pride Day

CLARENDON DAY PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY FOR AHS OUTREACH

The Arlington Historical Society shared a table with **Warren Nelson's** Sesquicentennial Commission on the Civil War for Clarendon Day on Sept. 28. The event was a great success, with large crowds and a steady flow of visitors to our tent to talk about Arlington and Civil War history and scoop up literature from both organizations. More than 30 visitors signed up for more information via email. AHS and the Commission have complementary missions, each focusing on different aspects of Arlington history.



Volunteers took turns manning the table: **John Richardson**, **Mileva** and **Richard Hartmann**, and **Max Gross** from AHS, and **Warren Nelson** and **Steve Lehman** from the Commission.

Photo courtesy of Garrett Peck

Warren Nelson from the Sesquicentennial Commission on the Civil War shows off a map to a visitor to the joint AHS-Commission tent.

DAWSON-BAILEY HOUSE FEATURED IN AHS PROGRAM

By Max Gross, AHS Board Member

The historical marker in front of the Dawson Terrace house in the North Highlands neighborhood of Arlington states that it is the first house to be built in Arlington County. In a feat of historical scholarship and deduction, local historian and Arlington Historical Society Second Vice President **Karl Van Newkirk** demonstrated why this is not the case.

That distinction still belongs to the Ball-Sellers House, believed to have been built in the 1740s and located in the Glencarlyn neighborhood. The so-called “Dawson-Bailey House,” more correctly “Dawson Terrace,” may well be the second oldest standing structure in the county, built between 1767-1785 by the speaker’s calculation. The Ball-Sellers House is owned and administered by the AHS, while Dawson Terrace is owned by Arlington County and administered by the Office of Historical Preservation. Today, Dawson Terrace is part of the Dawson Terrace Community Center (2133 N. Taft St.) and overlooks Spout Run Parkway, near Rosslyn.

Van Newkirk spoke Sept. 12 at the Arlington Central Library for a public program of AHS. To an audience of almost 50 -- many from the North Highlands neighborhood -- Van Newkirk outlined the history of the Dawson Terrace property, starting with Lord Fairfax’s 640-acre grant to Thomas Owsley in March 1697.

The original house was probably built as a tenant house under George Mason IV (of Gunston Hall). For many years, it was farmland controlled by descendants of the Mason family. Thomas Benoni Dawson then purchased 81 acres of this land, including the house, in 1859. The house remained in the Dawson family until the death of its last heir in 1955.

In a well-illustrated presentation that included photos, paintings and plat maps, Van Newkirk told the story of its owners, the Dawson family, whose last heir, Bessie Lola Dawson Bailey, was the last family member to live in the house, and her heirs transferred it to Arlington County. During the Civil War, much of the land was seized by the government for military purposes but then restored to the family after the war.



Photo courtesy of Max Gross

The Dawson-Bailey House, shown here, may be the second oldest standing structure in Arlington. It was probably built between 1767-1785.



Photo courtesy of Max Gross

Karl Van Newkirk spoke Sept. 12 about Arlington’s historic Dawson-Bailey House.

Both Robert E. Lee, who was a near neighbor at Arlington House before the war, and Abraham Lincoln are said to have visited the house. Van Newkirk began his lecture by giving credit to **Bruce Gregory McCoy**, now **Billy Case Plumb**, a resident of the neighborhood who had grown up near the house and recorded its history as well as relating much of it to Van Newkirk.

Van Newkirk noted that in the **19th** century the property, first called “Rio Vista” by Thomas Dawson and “Dawson Terrace” by his descendants after his death in 1895, had a splendid view of the Potomac River and Georgetown across the way, above Spout Run. Today that view is obscured by trees. The presentation also included a brief overview of the modern development of the North Highlands neighborhood.

facebook 

INTRIGUED BY THE DAWSON-BAILEY HOUSE?

Like Arlington Historical Society’s page on Facebook to learn about Arlington history, while keeping up to date on AHS programs, historical news and events.

2014 ARLINGTON HISTORY ESSAY CONTEST

Sponsors: Arlington Historical Society and Columbia Masonic Lodge #285

Topic: To what extent was Arlington County heroic or quixotic in its pursuit of school integration, considering contemporary trends?

Eligibility: 11th grade students in Arlington public schools

Entry deadline: February 1, 2014

Awards: AHS will make the following awards: First Place: \$1,000 & publication in the Arlington Historical Magazine; Second Place: \$500; Third Place: \$300; Two Honorable Mentions: \$100 each. Winners will be announced and prizes awarded at an awards ceremony, date and time to be provided.

Rules: For details and a full list of rules, see www.arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/2014-arlington-history-essay-contest/.

AHS SUPPORTER TURNS 100; SERVICE RECOGNIZED

AHS paid tribute to long-time member and supporter **Robert McAtee** on his 100th birthday party Oct. 27 at his Maywood residence, joining with other friends and neighbors in wishing him many happy returns. AHS President **John Richardson** presented McAtee with a framed certificate attesting to his long years of service and support to AHS. Richardson's remarks made note of McAtee's donation of his 1932 Washington-Lee High School cadet uniform, complete with sword, to AHS some years ago (the uniform is displayed periodically at the Arlington Historical Museum). McAtee remains in good health and easily blew out the candles on his birthday cake.

Photo courtesy of John Richardson

AHS President John Richardson acknowledges Robert McAtee's support for AHS at McAtee's 100th birthday party.



IN MEMORIAM: SHERMAN PRATT

Sherman W. Pratt died Sept. 23 in Arlington. He was 91.

Pratt was a decorated Army veteran and former president of the Arlington Historical Society (1995-1996).

He was born in Tucson, Ariz., and grew up in California and Arkansas. A retired Army lieutenant colonel, Pratt was a combat veteran who was awarded two Silver Stars – one in World War II and one during the Korean War – among other decorations.

After his military retirement in 1959, Pratt practiced law in Arlington before joining the legal office of the Federal Communications Commission in the late 1960s. He retired in 1979.

Pratt wrote a book about the history of Arlington and also self-published several books about his personal experiences.

Survivors include his wife of 49 years, **Anastasia Arlapanou Pratt** of Arlington; two children from his second marriage, **Paul Pratt** and **Christine Benincasa**, both of Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; and three grandchildren.

Donations in lieu of flowers may be sent to Capital Caring Hospice Services.

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY'S 150TH ANNIVERSARY

By Jennifer Lynch, Arlington National Cemetery Public Affairs Office

Arlington National Cemetery will host a series of special events from May through June 2014 designed to honor the traditions, remember the sacrifice and explore the history of the cemetery as it commemorates its 150th anniversary. Arlington National Cemetery was created out of necessity during the American Civil War and has become a national shrine for hundreds of thousands active-duty military members and veterans who have served during times of war and peace. The history of our nation can be seen every day at cemetery – America's heroes are buried at Arlington from every American conflict, from the Revolutionary War to the conflicts of the 21st century, and will continue to be for generations to come.

Starting in May 2014, Arlington National Cemetery will host a series of events to commemorate this important milestone in Arlington's history, starting with a wreath laying ceremony on May 13 at the gravesite of Army **Pvt. William Christman**, who was the first military burial at Arlington, and concludes with a wreath laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on June 15, the day Arlington officially became a national cemetery. The cemetery will also host informative lectures and tours that highlight the history of the United States through the eyes of its heroes buried at Arlington and the military conflicts that shaped the cemetery and the nation.

"Arlington National Cemetery is America's premier military cemetery and a sacred treasure in our nation's history. We are pleased to host a series of events to mark this special occasion," said **Patrick K. Hallinan**, executive director of Army National Military Cemeteries.

Selected "Arlington at 150" events:

May 13, 2014: Wreath Laying Ceremony at the grave of **Pvt. William Christman**, the first military burial at Arlington

May 13, 2014: Arlington National Cemetery 150th Anniversary Book Release Reception at the Women In Military Service for America Memorial

June 13, 2014: "Arlington at 150" Observance Program: A tribute to Arlington's Past, Present and Future," which will feature historical vignettes and musical performances. The evening event is free and open to the public.

ARLINGTON AT 150
To learn more, visit
www.arlingtoncemetery.mil.

June 15, 2014: Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Memorial Amphitheater, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

MEMORIAL BRIDGE RENAISSANCE

By John Richardson, AHS President

Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the Arlington Historical Society has been designated a "consulting party" for a massive repair and rehabilitation of Memorial Bridge. The initial convening of representatives of federal, state and local agencies took place Sept. 30 at National Park Service George Washington Memorial Parkway headquarters. The morning session was attended by more than 30 individuals, among them **Rebecca Ballo** of the County Historic Preservation Office. The afternoon session consisted of a guided tour of the inner workings of Memorial Bridge that gave a close-up view of alarming deterioration of vital bridge members because of corrosion. Repair/rehabilitation proposals estimate costs between \$128 million and \$207 million and two-lane closures between 635 and 1,448 days; full bridge closures ranged between 50 and 100 days. It is hoped that construction can begin by 2016, although funding must be obtained.

Memorial Bridge was dedicated by President Herbert Hoover in 1932 and was infused with historic as well as aesthetic and engineering significance from the start. 1932 was the bicentennial of the birth of George Washington and inauguration of the George Washington Memorial Parkway to Mount Vernon. Unique engineering was required to permit the bridge's center span to open but keep the massive counterweights for the span out of sight (at the time, Memorial Bridge was unique among drawbridges, the standard design of which requires highly visible counterweights.) Joseph Strauss, an eminent designer of the period, is credited with the bridge's integrated aesthetic and engineering elements. The draw span was last opened in 1961 to allow the "Watergate" barge to be towed away.



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The Arlington Historical Society (AHS) is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization founded in 1956 and incorporated under the laws of Virginia for literary and educational purposes that support research, collection, preservation, discovery, restoration and dissemination of the local history of Arlington County.

WWW.ARLINGTONHISTORY.ORG

**HISTORY AWAITS.
COME VISIT!**

ARLINGTON HISTORICAL MUSEUM

1805 South Arlington Ridge Rd.
Open Saturdays & Sundays
1 - 4 p.m., Free
Come visit our permanent exhibits on
the 200+ year history of the county.

BALL-SELLERS HOUSE

5620 South Third St.
Open Saturdays 1 - 4 p.m.
April through October
Also arrange a visit by calling 703-379-2123.
Free admission, but donations appreciated.

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