

ARLINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY YEAR IN REVIEW

1996 – 1997

July–August 1996

A reception in recognition of Sara Collins' extraordinary assistance to the Society over the more than thirty years of her service with the Arlington County Library was hosted by Gail Baker and Bette Clements. The Society's booth at the Arlington County Fair was a financial success, as over \$800 in sales were made, primarily from our publications and t-shirts. All of the volunteers did a wonderful job of promoting the fine work of the Society and the Arlington Historical and Ball–Sellers House Museums. The committee responsible for the exhibit at the fair was composed of Sy Stiss (chairman), Bette Clements, Norm Novack, Hal Handerson, Agnes Mullins, and Darline Hannabass. Brochures describing the Ball–Sellers House were published and distributed to county libraries and tourist locations. The July program at the Ball–Sellers House was on spinning thread, by Joi Kudirka.

September 1996

The beginning of a new season for the Society. The building was still being invaded by animal(s) and board discussions concerned how to obtain funds to cover the elimination of their presence. During this month the installation of the environmental monitoring system in the building was nearly completed. This installation was recommended as a safeguard for the collection. The monthly general membership meeting commemorated forty years of making history by preserving history, and featured a panel composed of Jack Foster, Karl VanNewkirk, Martha Orth, and Allen Kitchens and moderated by Norman Novack. The panel spoke on various aspects of the Society's operations over the years. The Ball–Sellers monthly event was a tree identifying walk through the neighborhood and Glencarlyn Park led by naturalist Pam Newitt. The Garden Club of Virginia installed a garden fence and a new arbor for the giant wisteria at the Ball–Sellers House.

October 1996

After some preliminary work for several months, a new insurance policy covering the Hume School and the Ball–Sellers property was issued to the Society. This was a new approach since previously the properties were insured as separate entities. Plans were made for a change in the exhibit in the museum. An exciting happening for the Ball–Sellers House—a direct descendant of John Ball was located living in Salt Lake City, Utah. The President of AHS was directed to forward a letter to the County Board asking for funds to allow the hiring of a full time paid employee and a small amount for operating expenses. Also, the Board discussed the 24 acres of untouched grounds near the Arlington House that was scheduled for transfer from the Department of the Interior to the Department of the Army for additional burial sites. The Society launched a campaign against such a move. Historic Arlington Day was held on October 19; the Society and the Arlington Heritage Alliance co-sponsored a tour of Fort C.F. Smith Park, led by Chris Munson, and Mary McCutcheon led scarecrow-making at the Ball–Sellers House.

November 1996

The museum director gave a report on the condition of the facility which was rather grim and contained several serious items. The estimate to clean the attic after raccoon(s) were eliminated seemed very expensive. It was time to again change the security system due to new officers, etc. The Society archivist attended a workshop on the basics of preservation which

was very informative. The monthly general meeting featured Sherman Pratt and Fort Myer historian Kim Holien, who showed slides about the fort; he also showed a recently discovered motion picture film clip, shot by Thomas Edison in 1908 as Orville Wright and a copilot demonstrated the military capabilities of the airplane over Fort Myer. J. Carter Newman donated a framed genealogy tracing Robert E. Lee's ancestry to King Henry III of England, compiled by Benedictine monk Wilfred Bayne, to the Society. Maggie Hume Britt, great-great granddaughter of Frank Hume, presented family photographs and other historical documents to the museum. The Ball-Sellers docents celebrated the close of a successful season with a pot-luck supper at the Orth's; honored guests were Marian and David Wallace.

December 1996

An attempt was made to acquire some of the bricks from the old Arlington County Courthouse after it was demolished. Some bricks were acquired but the plan to use them as a fund raiser was abandoned. Work continued in the effort to strengthen the docent program. The Ball-Sellers Committee reviewed the long range plan of 1993 and rated what they had accomplished since that time.

January 1997

This month is the half way mark for fiscal year 1997. Income for the first six months exceeded expenditures, but it was expected that income would lessen during the last half of the fiscal year. Further Board discussion included plans to increase the membership. The continuing problems of "cleanup", moisture in the building, etc. were discussed again by the Board this month. The outline of a program to expand the outreach program of the Society was presented. A committee was to begin work on instituting this program.

February 1997

The second floor where a great part of the collection is stored was secured and prepared for the contractor to come in and clean up the attic after the "wild creature" that had inhabited it for some time had been removed. Bids were solicited for regrading the front lawn in an attempt to eliminate water in the building basement. Bids were also received from companies to clean the facility on a regular basis. Plans were completed for an "open board meeting" to look at the original long-range plan for updating. The meeting was scheduled to be held at George Mason University, Arlington campus. The January membership meeting had to be postponed until February due to weather; Kim Holien spoke on "Confederates in Arlington."

March 1997

This month the Board was reminded that a commitment had been made to raise \$50,000 in five years for the Acorn Society of the Arlington Community Fund. One purpose of the long-range planning sessions was to discuss ways of raising the funds. An attempt was made to list all administrative records stored in private homes. The major cleaning of the attic was completed as well as painting and other improvements needed in other areas. Work began to mount an exhibit reflective of the county's entire history. The March membership meeting featured a report from the 1860 Map Committee on the progress of their project.

April 1997

The long-range planning meeting originally scheduled for February, and postponed due to inclement weather, was held during the month of April. Its agenda included a review and update of the AHS mission, a discussion of the human, political, and financial resources needed to carry on that mission, and a consideration of effective ways of carrying out the mission. Four committees were established: Museum, Building, Finance, Communications. The meeting was an opportunity for members of the Society to voice their concerns and present fresh ideas on fund raising. The archivist reported that during the year there had been numerous requests for pictures of various sections of Arlington County from private persons and from commercial projects; all these requests were met efficiently and capably. The Ball-Sellers House opened its 1997 special events calendar with a plant walk led by naturalist Alonso Abougattos.

May 1997

The Society's annual banquet was held on May 9 at the Sheraton National Hotel. The program was "Building of the Flag," presented by Arlington Hall Chapter 440, National Sojourners. The annual meeting of the Society, including election and installation of officers for the following year, was held at the same time. The Ball-Sellers House event of the month was a talk by Clarita Anderson on woven antique coverlets.

June 1997

The Arlington Heritage Alliance and the Society jointly sponsored a program at Fort C.F. Smith entitled "Refugees Returning: Spies and Skirmishes in the Civil War in Arlington." The Ball-Sellers House held two events this month: a wood carving demonstration by Northern Virginia Carvers, and a children's history hunt, headed by Valerie Martineau. A Society-sponsored tour, led by Michael Kauffman, and retracing the John Wilkes Booth escape route from Ford's Theater in the District of Columbia to the Potomac River at Pope's Creek in Maryland, was held on June 28.