

ARLINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY YEAR IN REVIEW 2014–2015

October 2014

On October 7, the Arlington Historical Museum (Hume School) hosted a visit from the Arlington Fire Department (Chrystal City Station #105), along with an aerial truck, who courteously restored the broken school bell rope at the top; of the museum. The Society is greatly appreciative.

On October 9, well-known Arlington civil rights activist in the 1960s, Joan Mulhollan, gave a talk to the Society at the Arlington Central Library on her experiences in the civil rights movement. A resident of Buckingham Gardens at the time, she also recalled the special community that centered on that apartment complex at the time. She showed portions of a film that her son had made about her life, which included interviews with her but also with others who had been active in the movement.

On October 25, AHS Board member Jennifer Jablonsky organized and held another in her series of children's programs called *Stories at the Museum*. On this occasion the subject was "Ship" stories about different US ships.

November 2014

On November 5, the Society conducted its first annual House History Workshop at the Arlington Central Library. Twenty-five couples received guidance and training about how to search County and other records to learn about the history of the property/ies they now own. Under the able leadership of Program Director Jennifer Jablonsky, a partnership between the Society, the Arlington County Historic Preservation Office and the Arlington County Public Library made this event possible.

On November 13, Lloyd Wolf, the director of the *Columbia Pike Documentary Project*, presented a program at the Arlington Central Library on the work of his group. Highly illustrated with colorful photos, the lecture captured the diverse community that inhabits the Columbia Pike corridor. The program amply illustrated that people from virtually every country of the world live on or near the Pike. One purpose of the project is to capture the life of Columbia Pike that soon will be quite different as the corridor undergoes rapid urbanization. On November 22, AHS Board member Jennifer Jablonsky organized and held another in her series of children's programs called *Stories at the Museum*. On this occasion the subject was "Planes" stories about different US aircraft.

On November 20-23, AHS President John Richardson presented a historical

paper at the Historical Studies Conference of the Washington DC Historical Society. A feature of the conference was bus tours of Arlington, including visits to the Arlington Historical Museum and the Ball-Sellers House.

December 2014

On December 6, AHS Board members served as judges for a local history exhibit competition among students at Marymount University. The contest was organized by Dr. Mark Benbow, faculty member in the history department at Marymount and also Director of the Arlington County Museum. The winning exhibit chosen was entitled, "The Founding Sisters." The display was designed by four Marymount students: Emma Enkhsaikhan, Dalia Faris, Amy Lawton, and Apasrin Suvanasai. The winning exhibit was on display at the Arlington Historical Museum between February-June 2015.

On December 11, Cathy Hicks, the Director of Social Studies in the Arlington County School system, presented a talk entitled "Bringing History Alive: The Teaching of Social Studies in the Arlington Public Schools."

On December 13, Board members and many members of the Society sadly attended the memorial service for Sarah Collins, long a stalwart of the Society. May she rest in peace.

On December 15, AHS President John Richardson attended an evening program celebrating the life of the late Talmadge Williams, whose Black Heritage Museum of Arlington (BHMA) has been co-sponsor of an Arlington black heritage exhibit being assembled at the Arlington Historical Museum .

On December 20, AHS Board Member Jennifer Jablonsky organized and held another in her series of children's programs, this time called *Make Your Own Holiday Ornament and Cards*. The top floor of the Arlington County Museum was for an afternoon transformed into a studio of arts and crafts for the local Arlington children who attended the event.

January 2015

On January 8, Rob Farr, the Director of Arlington County TV and also an adjunct faculty member at George Mason University, made a presentation to the Society at Marymount University on *Movies and TV Shows filmed in Arlington*. Although Hollywood often films in Washington, DC, it is also true that some of this filming takes place in Arlington. Illustrated with film clips, a delighted audience enjoyed scenes of familiar places highlighted on the big screen.

On January 23, the Society held a reception to mark the opening an exhibit on the four founding sisters of Marymount University. The display was designed by four Marymount students under the supervision of Museum Director Mark Benbow (see entry for December 6). Marymount President Dr. Matthew Shank

attended the opening, as did three of the retired sisters who taught at Marymount.

February 2014

On February 12, author Sue Eisenfeld gave an AHS-sponsored talk about her book, *Shenandoah: A Story of Conservation and Betrayal* at Marymount University. Based on interviews, mainly with descendants of the families who were displaced by the US government decision to create Shenandoah National Park, Ms Eisenfeld attempts to recreate the life and livelihoods of the small rural society that inhabited the region in Virginia that became the Park.

March 2015

On March 12, National Park Ranger David Lassman gave a most interesting AHS-sponsored talk at Marymount University on the origins of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, which he called *The Road to Happiness*. Evoking the era of the 1930s, when the automobile was a fairly new innovation and existing roads were far more rude than those of today, he reminded his listeners that the Parkway is in fact a national park, a route of scenic beauty. How often do drivers caught in rush hour along it remember this fact? The plan for the Parkway was far more ambitious than the route we know today, but his talk was a reminder that what we have is a national monument that should command our respect and attention.

April 2015

On April 4, the Society held a reception at the Museum to mark the opening of the new Black Heritage exhibit. Done in conjunction with the Black Heritage Museum of Arlington (BHMU) and Dr. Kevin Strait of the Smithsonian Museum of African-American History, the exhibit, which will be a permanent part of the Museum's collection, marks a significant conceptual step forward in presenting a larger part of Arlington's history.

On April 9, Civil War buff Ron Bumgarten gave a fascinating AHS-sponsored talk at Marymount University on *War Contraband Camps in Northern Virginia*. Prior to the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation and the 1865 creation of the Freedman's Bureau, a number of former slaves, mainly from Virginia, made their way to Washington. Labeled "contrabands" because of their unsettled legal status, the Union Army established five camps across the Potomac in Alexandria County (Arlington) to house them and to provide them with opportunities to engage in independent farming. These camps were established on farms confiscated from secessionist farmers who had fled South at the beginning of the war. In a stunning feat of original historical research, Mr. Bumgarten has put together the story of these camps.

May 2015

On May 13, the Society conducted its second annual House History Workshop at the Arlington Central Library. Twenty-five couples (0 individuals) received guidance and training about how to search County and other records to learn about the history of the property/ies they now own.

On May 14, the Society held its annual meeting at the Arlington Central Library. Elections for the new Board were conducted (see page 4 in this magazine for results). Karl VanNewkirk, for many years the editor of this journal, was elected President of the Society for the year May 2015-May 2016. Speaker at the event, Arlington Police Captain Michelle Nuneville presented a most interesting history of the Arlington Police Department to a large audience at the Arlington Central Library. As she spoke, the Department, established in 1940, was celebrating the 75th year of its existence. Captain Nuneville related the gradual growth from a very small force to its current size of 370 officers. She focused on the contributions of its successive police chiefs, not forgetting to note that the first woman on the force was hired (for juvenile duties) in 1973. Captain Nuneville, a thirty-year veteran of the department and who teaches the history of the force at the police academy, related many entertaining anecdotes in telling the story of the department.

June 2015

On June 5, the Society held its annual banquet at the Holiday Inn in Rosslyn. The guest speaker was Dr. Charlene Drew Jarvis, former DC Councilwoman and President of Southeastern University. She is also the daughter of Dr. Charles Drew, famous for his pioneer work with blood plasma and blood transfusion during World War II. At the banquet, the Society made two awards. The Cornelia B. Rose Award, given each year to a group or individual that has made a significant contribution to the advancement and preservation of Arlington County history, was presented to Charlie Clark. Mr Clark is a local historian and journalist, whose column, "Our Man in Arlington: and recent book incorporating 106 of these columns about Arlington have done much to increase our understanding of our community. The second award was the Volunteer of the Year Award. This year's award was given to the Friends of the Hume School, a group of volunteers in the surrounding neighborhoods who help to maintain the school grounds and conduct twice-yearly, major cleanup, including weeding, and mulching. Mr. Chick Walter, the coordinator of the cleanups was present to receive the award on behalf of the group.

On June 11, National Park Ranger David Lassman, in a follow-up to his account of the origins of the George Washington Memorial Parkway given to the Society in March, gave yet another presentation at the Arlington Central Library on *The*

Significance of Arlington Memorial Bridge and Memorial Highway. Although originally conceived as early as 1886, no action was taken until the 1930s, when it was built to connect the Parkway with Washington, DC. Designed as an “Avenue of Heros,” it is lined with monuments and memorials of different American heors. Who among us think of this as we weave through speeding traffic as we cross the bridge?

On June 17, the Society announced the winner of its annual essay contest sponsored by it and Columbia Masonic Lodge 285 for 11th grade students in the Arlington County Public School System. The topic of this year’s contest was, “During the Civil War, Arlington (Alexandria County) found itself at the boundary between North and South, both culturally and militarily. Describe and discuss the effect of this juxtaposition, both then and subsequently.” The winner of the contest was Ms Lydia Cawley of Washington-Lee High School, and she was presented with a check for \$1,200.00.

July 2015

On July 16, long-time AHS member Martha Orth gave a talk at the Arlington Central Library, which she titled *A Love Affair with an Old House: The Ball-Seller’s House*. Recalling the day in early 1975 when she received a call from Marian Sellers asking if the Society would be interested in the donation of her house, the oldest extant house in Arlington, as a gift to be used as a museum, Ms Orth, who has now been associated with the Ball-Sellers house for forty years, related the story of this old house which has now existed for 250 years in the Glencarlyn section of Arlington.

August 2015

On August 6-9, members of the Society manned a table at the Arlington County Fair, held each year on the grounds of the Thomas Jefferson Community Center. We distributed literature about the Society and sold books and postcards and generally had many conversations with passers-by about AHS and its work.

September 2015

On September 20, author and AHS Board member Garret Peck made a presentation at the Arlington Central Library of the subject of his recent book, *Walt Whitman in Washington, DC*. Written in conjunction with the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, Mr. Garrett retold the story of Whitman’s work among the war wounded, how this service served as an inspiration to him, and how he has inspired us all. The book is available for sale at the Arlington Historical Museum on Ridge Road in Arlington.