

ARLINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY YEAR IN REVIEW

2015–2016

In 2016, the Arlington Historical Society, founded in 1956, is celebrating its 60th anniversary as an organization dedicated to preserving and promoting the history of Arlington County, Virginia.

The Society has had many notable accomplishments in fulfilling this mission over the past 60 years, not the least of which were its successes in the various program areas discussed below in which it was active over the past year.

Arlington Historical Museum

Perhaps the best known program of the Arlington Historical Society is the Arlington Historical Museum. The Society has operated this program in the historic Hume School building at 1805 S. Arlington Ridge Road since the early 1960's. During the last year, the museum was open to the public on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons and by appointment, staffed by a team of trained docents. Dr. Mark Benbow, a member of the history faculty at Marymount University, served as Museum Director. Haley Wallace was Museum Curator. In the fiscal year July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016, museum docents recorded a total of 468 museum visitors.

The museum contains permanent exhibits on Arlington County history from prehistoric times to the present. In the last year, the number of permanent exhibits was expanded with the addition of more exhibit cases. One of the new cases is devoted to the colonial era. Another contains an exhibit on the Civil War forts that encircled the Union Capital City of Washington, protecting it from Confederate attack, including the forts in Arlington.

In 2015-2016, the Society mounted several temporary exhibits at the museum, displaying artifacts from its own collection as well as items on temporary loan. One temporary exhibit on childrens' books and games related to the Civil War and curreted by Marymount University student Chesney Rhodes, was first displayed at the Manassas Museum from August through November 2015. It contained artifacts from that museum as well exhibits on loan from our museum. When the Manassas Museum closed the exhibit, they loaned it to our museum for exhibit from November 2015 through January 2016.

Another temporary exhibit staged at our museum was entitled "What's for Dinner? Buying Groceries in a Century of Change." It showed how grocery buying in Arlington has changed in the last 100 years. It ran from January to May 2016. Another was entitled "Arlington's Gang War of 1966," and ran during

the summer of 2016. It featured artifacts and photos about a shootout between rival motorcycle gangs on the Safeway market parking lot at Lee Highway and North Harrison Street on June 14, 1966.

The Society hosted several special programs at the museum in the past year, including a winter social reception for members of the Society on January 9, 2016 and a keepsake-quality holiday ornament making party oriented primarily to children on December 5, 2015. A temporary holiday exhibit with a Christmas tree and vintage toys and games from the museum's collection, curreted by Museum Curator Haley Wallace, was set up for these events.

The Hume School building in which the museum program operates itself is an historic artifact. It was built in 1891 and served as a public school until 1958. It is the oldest structure built as a school in Arlington County. The Society preserves the building and its grounds and opens them to the public as part of its mission to preserve and promote Arlington County history. The Hume School building serves as the headquarters of the Society as well housing the museum program.

As they have for the past 11 years, a group of volunteers from the Arlington Ridge Civic Association spent a Saturday in both Fall and Spring engaged in a thorough clean-up of the Hume School grounds. The effort was orchestrated by Hume School neighbor Chick Walter. This civic support for the property contributes greatly to the appearance of the old Hume School and its grounds.

The Society works with public agencies and private organizations to organize exhibits on Arlington County history outside the Arlington Historical Museum, sometimes loaning artifacts from our museum's collection. The museum loaned material to the Center for Local History of the Arlington Central Library for an exhibit on World War II that was on display in April 2016. Museum staff has organized exhibits for the Aurora Hills Branch Library on several occasions. They staged an exhibit there using artifacts from the museum on Arlington life in the 1920's, commemorating the branch's 90th anniversary.

In the last year, the museum staff put together a portable "school visit" box in a wheeled cart. The box contains objects people can handle that Society speakers can use when making presentations to outside groups.

Ball-Sellers House

The Society has operated the Ball-Sellers House at 5620 S. Third Street in Arlington's Glencarlyn neighborhood as a historic house museum since 1975, when the building and grounds were donated to the Society. The main building on the property includes the John Ball cabin, a structure built by its original owner, John Ball, in the 1740's as a yeoman farmer's house. The cabin is the oldest structure in Arlington County and contains many period elements. The Society maintains displays of historic artifacts inside the cabin. The grounds

contain several other, smaller historic accessory structures. During the past year, the Society opened the John Ball cabin to the public on Saturday and summer holiday afternoons from April to October and by appointment.

The Society operates the Ball-Sellers House through a committee chaired by Ms. Annette Benbow, and staffs the house with one or more of approximately 15 trained docents when open to the public. The docents sometimes dress in period-appropriate colonial era attire. In the fiscal year July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016, the staff counted 351 visitors to the Ball-Sellers House. Other visitors examine the grounds and read the historical marker at the house when staff is not on duty.

The Ball-Sellers House hosted a number of group tours in the last year. In October 2015, a group from Arlington's sister city of Aachen, Germany, visited the house. In 2016, group visitors included the Arlington 55 Plus tour of historic Arlington, 40 participants in the Smithsonian Associates' "Glimpse of Old Arlington" tour, the Order of the Eastern Star Unity Chapter 201, Arlington County's Encore Learning local history class, Cub Scout Pack No. 141, and a busload of Arlington Public Schools administrators. As mentioned below, the Society's George Washington's forest walking tour in 2016 began and ended at the Ball-Sellers House.

Starting in August 2016, the Society sponsored an archeological dig searching for remains of the east wing of the Ball-Sellers House, which was demolished before 1920. The east wing served as a public school for 14 children in the late 1890's. The dig was undertaken in connection with the planned installation of a rain garden on the site with a grant from the Arlington County Government under its Stormwater Wise program. The rain garden is designed to deal with water drainage concerns at the site. Patrick L. O'Neill, a professional archeologist, is supervising the dig. In August alone, a total of 46 people donated almost 500 hours of their time to conduct the dig. At the time of publication of this report, their efforts had yielded hundreds of glass, ceramic, and clay pieces of household items and scores of other artifacts as well as clues on the location of the chimney and the cornerstone of one of the walls of the Ball-Sellers House.

Public Lectures and Tours

The Society continued its tradition of sponsoring public lectures and tours over the past year. Some of the lectures were presented as part of the Society's membership meetings, ordinarily held on the second Thursday of September, November, January, March, and May. Others were stand-alone lecture programs. The Society works with Arlington TV, the visual communications channel for the Arlington County Government, to make its lectures available to the public on YouTube through Arlington TV at <https://tv.arlingtonva.us/videos/history>. As noted below, three of the lectures sponsored by the Society in the past year, as well as lectures sponsored by the

Society in previous years, are available for viewing through Arlington TV on YouTube.

On October 7, 2015, the Society sponsored a lecture at Marymount University by Carlo DeVito, author of the recent book *Mrs. Lee's Rose Garden: The True Story of the Founding of Arlington National Cemetery*. Mr. DeVito focused his lecture on Union General Montgomery Meigs' decision during the Civil War to establish a burial ground for Union soldiers in the rose garden of Arlington House, the estate of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, which was occupied by the Union Army at the time. General Lee's wife had had a special affection for the rose garden. The burial ground was expanded and subsequently became Arlington National Cemetery.

The meeting of the Society's members on November 13, 2015 at Marymount University featured a lecture by Annette Benbow. Ms. Benbow's lecture expanded upon her article in the 2014 issue of *The Arlington Historical Magazine* on the 13 U.S. armed service members from Arlington who lost their lives in World War I. Ms. Benbow's lecture included an extensive slide presentation. It focused on the four service members about whom she was able to gather the most information.

The January 14, 2016 meeting of the Society at Marymount University included a lecture by Michael Nardolilli, former leader of the C&O Canal Trust and the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority. In his lecture, Mr. Nardolilli talked about the surprising connections between the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal and the W&OD Railroad in the history of Arlington.

On February 11, 2016, Dr. Alfred Taylor delivered a lecture sponsored by the Society at Marymount University. Dr. Taylor is the author of a recent book entitled *Bridge Builders of Nauck/Green Valley*. In his talk, Dr. Taylor recounted interesting stories about many personalities who lived in the historically African-American Arlington neighborhood of Nauck, which was formerly known as Green Valley.

The meeting of the Society on March 10, 2016 at Marymount University included a lecture by Dr. William Wayson. He discussed his book, *Martha Jefferson Randolph: Republican Daughter and Plantation Mistress*. Mr. Wayson's talk and book explored the relationship between Martha Jefferson and her father, Thomas Jefferson, third President of the United States. He analyzed over 900 letters written by Mrs. Randolph, her father, her husband, and others in writing his book. This lecture is available for viewing on YouTube through Arlington TV at <https://tv.arlingtonva.us/videos/history>.

On April 14, 2016, the Society sponsored a lecture by Michael Signer at Marymount University. Mr. Signer spoke about James Madison, the fourth President of the United States, who is the subject of Mr. Signer's recent book,

Becoming Madison. Mr. Signer is the mayor of Charlottesville, Virginia. He grew up in the Lyon Village neighborhood of Arlington and was graduated from Washington-Lee High School. The author stressed Madison's ability and determination to follow his conscience, a theme developed in his book.

Mid-May was a busy time for the Society. At its annual meeting on May 12, 2016, the Society heard from author Eric Buckland on Mosby's Rangers. Mr. Buckland focused on a few of the men who served in that battalion of Confederate soldiers noted for its lightning quick raids and its ability to elude Union Army pursuers and disappear, blending in with local farmers and townsmen in Central Northern Virginia. This lecture is available for viewing on YouTube through Arlington TV at <https://tv.arlingtonva.us/videos/history>.

Arlington's Congressman, Don Beyer, was the principal speaker at the Society's 60th anniversary banquet on May 13, 2016. Mr. Beyer spoke mainly about his own family's history in Northern Virginia, with a particular emphasis on the career of his grandmother, Clara Mortenson Beyer, an advocate for women's rights for her entire life of almost 100 years, who served as the "right hand" person to U.S. Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins during the Franklin Roosevelt Administration.

On May 14, 2016, the Society once again sponsored its history walking tour of George Washington's forest in South Arlington, led by local historian Kevin Vincent. The tour began and ended at the Ball-Sellers House.

The Society continued active programming during the summer of 2016. On June 9, 2016, the Society sponsored a lecture at the Arlington Central Library by author Charles Mills on historic cemeteries in Northern Virginia. This lecture is available for viewing on YouTube through Arlington TV at <https://tv.arlingtonva.us/videos/history>.

On July 14, the Society sponsored another lecture at the Arlington Central Library, this one by Katherine Egner Gruber on clothing during the colonial era. Ms. Gruber's research was based on the account book of William Carlin, a tailor in Alexandria who clothed George Washington and George Mason as well as other notables. Mr. Carlin purchased the John Ball cabin, now part of the Ball-Sellers House, and surrounding acreage after John Ball's death. Using the Carlin account book and other sources, Ms. Gruber was able to tell a compelling story of how people in our area dressed and what they paid for items of clothing during the colonial era.

Community Outreach and Support

The Society set up displays on Arlington local history at a number of community events over the year. On September 26, 2015, the Society set up a display at the Clarendon Day festival, which gave members staffing the display an opportunity to "talk Arlington history" with festival goers who stopped

by. On June 4, 2016, the Society set up a display at Glencarlyn Day called "Touching History" with historical artifacts for children (of all ages) to touch and learn about Arlington's past. Docents and friends of the Ball-Sellers House, dressed in colonial era garb, walked in the Glencarlyn Day parade on that day, in solidarity with people from the Glencarlyn neighborhood in which the house is located. From August 18 to 21, 2016, the Society set up and staffed a booth at the Arlington County Fair which featured a history quiz and display called, "What Happened Here?" that asked fairgoers to guess what happened at various locations in Arlington County.

The Society routinely serves as a resource on local history for the Arlington County and Federal Governments and local businesses and organizations. The Society maintains a speaker's bureau of Society members prepared to make presentations to outside groups. On August 12, 2016, the President of the Society, Karl VanNewkirk, a frequent lecturer on Arlington County history, led a bus tour of Arlington County historical sites for administrators from across the Arlington Public Schools district, including the stop at the Ball-Sellers House discussed above. During the year, the Society served as a consulting party under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for Federal agencies contemplating changes or rehabilitation to Arlington Memorial Bridge; Arlington House; The Robert E. Lee Memorial; Interstate Highway I-66 in Arlington; the U.S. Marine Corps (Iwo Jima) Memorial; and Arlington National Cemetery. As discussed above under "Arlington Historical Museum," the Society has worked with the Arlington Public Library system to stage exhibits on Arlington history at its central and branch libraries. And in June 2016 Museum director Mark Benbow and Ball-Sellers chair, Annette Benbow, appeared on WERA-FM (Arlington Radio) on the "Grace in 30" show to talk about Arlington history and the Ball-Sellers house.

Research, Publishing and Book Sales

During the year, the Society continued to maintain its website at www.ArlingtonHistoricalSociety.org. The website contains information and links to information on Arlington County history as well as information about the Society itself. The Society also maintains an active Facebook page, with daily postings on "this day in Arlington history," as well as other postings on Arlington history generally. The Facebook page currently is "liked" by 2,275 people, a 900% increase over the past three years. Average weekly views of the Facebook page are approximately 10,000. As noted above, the Society makes available video recordings of many of the lectures it has sponsored on YouTube through the website of Arlington TV at <https://tv.arlingtonva.us/videos/history>.

The Society continued during the year to sell copies of two books that it had published previously, *Arlington County, Virginia: A History*, by C.B. Rose,

Jr. (Port City Press, 1976) and Arlington Historical Society, *Images of America: Arlington* (Arcadia Publishing, 2000). The Society displayed and sold these books, as well as other publications on Arlington history, in the small store that it maintains at the Arlington Historical Museum. The Society also displayed and sold some publications at community outreach events.

In cooperation with Columbia Masonic Lodge No. 285 of Arlington and Arlington Public Schools, the Society once again sponsored a high school history essay contest this year. The assigned topic was "Discuss how the opening of Metro in the 1970s affected Arlington and how you think it might continue to influence the county's development in future years." The first prize winner was James Gusmer of Washington-Lee High School, whose winning essay will be published in the 2016 edition of *The Arlington Historical Magazine*.

The Society published issue No. 3, Volume 15 of *The Arlington Historical Magazine* in late 2015. The magazine is an annual publication with scholarly articles on Arlington County history. Dr. Max L. Gross, former Dean of the School of Intelligence Studies at the National Intelligence University, served as Editor of the issue. The magazine contained five articles, one on the Febrey homestead, another on community development in the Hall's Hill neighborhood, a third on Arlington Ridge Road, a fourth containing an excerpt from an oral history of Neil Bassin of Buckingham Florist, and the fifth consisting of the winning essay from the 2015 high school history essay contest co-sponsored by the Society. The magazine also contained reports on the work of the Society during 2014-2015. Copies of the magazine were sent to all members of the Society and library subscribers and were available for sale in the museum store.

The Society published a quarterly newsletter in 2015-2016. The newsletter contained notices of upcoming events on Arlington history, short vignettes on Arlington history, and short articles on recent lecture programs and other events. The newsletter was sent by mail to all members of the Society and is available on the Society's website.

At the beginning of each month, the Society sent an e-mail notice of upcoming events involving Arlington history to a list of subscribers. The notice contained information on events sponsored by the Society as well as other organizations.

Awards

Over the years, the Society has presented honorary awards for contributions to the preservation and promotion of Arlington County history and to the Society itself. These awards are customarily given at the Society's annual banquet, as they were this year in May 2016. The Society presented its Cornelia B. Rose Award, for contributions to Arlington County history, to Dr. Alfred O. Taylor Jr., whose recently published book on Arlington's Nauck community highlights

contributions to society by various members of the oldest black neighborhood in Arlington. The Society presented its Lifetime Volunteer Award to Eleanor Pourron, who for 20 years has served as the volunteer manager of the museum store at the Arlington Historical Museum operated by the Society, keeping it stocked with books and other educational materials that help educate visitors about the history and heritage of Arlington County. The Society presented its Volunteer of the Year Award to Matthew T. Keough, the coordinator of docents at the Arlington Historical Museum for the past nine years.

Membership

The Society maintains the following categories of membership: Life (currently, one-time dues payment of \$1,000), Business (\$150 annual dues), Donor (\$125 annual dues), Sponsor (\$75 annual dues), Family (\$40 annual dues), and Individual (\$25 annual dues). At the end of its fiscal year, June 30, 2016, the Society had 320 memberships, many of which were recorded in the names of two individuals. Current Life, Business, Donor and Sponsor Members are:

Life Members

A. M. Barr	Tom & Barbara Kelley
Greg Bayens	Martha A. Klein
James Berkey	Daniel Koski-Karell
Carol Laikin Carpenter	Michelle A. Krowl
Jane Patrick Casey	Margaret Lampe
Charles & Beverley Kelly Casserly	Anna Belle Lane
Susan Christopher	Melvin W. Little
Loretta V. Cleek	Walton H. Owen
Herbert R. Collins	Mrs. Alta Parker
Susan A. Dennis	Philip Perkins
George W. Dodge	King Prather
Margaret Fisher	William & Annette Reilly
Ellen Ford	Michael P. Rose
Edwin Fountain	Libby Ross
Dr. Claudine Gay-Bryant	Sheryl Scull
Robert Henry Gills	James Johnson & Matthew H. Shepard
Kathrine L. Hamblett	Johnathan Thomas
Harold Handerson	Robert & Susan Trice
Don Hartline	Karl & Luella VanNewkirk
Margaret Huddleston	Linda L. Warden
Vicki & Buford Hunnicutt	Laura M. Watson
Eleanor Hunter	Anne C. Webb
Isabel Kaldenbach	

Business Members

Glass Distributors, Inc., Bladensburg, MD
Whitestone Custom Homes, Arlington, VA

Donor Members

Anna M. Necheles & Kevin R. Appel	Paxton Baker & Nancy Lowenthal
Peter & Collette Arntson	John Snyder & Heather McPhail
George & Martha Axiotis	David & Conchita Mitchell
Ellen Barnhart	Joan Morgan
Mark & Annette Benbow	Mary Jane Nelson & John Niehaus
Charlene & Harlow Bickford	Nicholas & Kristen Noble
Ann C. Connell	Donald & Martha Orth
John & Suzanne Courtright	Lynne Porfiri
Edwin & Rosalie Demoney	Eleanor K. Pourron
Kevin & Jennifer Jablonsky Dubina	King Prather
Ali Ganjian	Elizabeth & Erik Rasmussen
Max & Nasrine Gross	Jane S. Sara
Charles & Cathy Hix	Judith Herman & Thomas Spavins
David Turvene & Tracy Hopkins	Mary Dodge & Donald Strehle
Joe Youcha & Jessica Kaplan	Ciro Taddeo
Thomas & Idaclaire Kerwin	Nancy Tate
Denny Truesdale & Jerilyn Levi	John & Mary Tuohy
Anne Hume Loikow	Carol Zdobysz
Janice & Gary Long	

Sponsor Members

Dean & Connie Allard	Charles & Josephine Ludolph
Peter & Colette Arnston	Susan K. and Warren Nelson
Susanne Bachtel	Mary Niebuhr
Stuart & Patricia Beatty	Diane H. Perry
Kendra Briechele	Kathryn Peerson
Kenneth & Susan Cohn	Kitty & Al Richmond
Linda S. Edquist	James Riley
Brenda A. Pommerenke & Larry George	Nelson Rimensnyder
Donald & Wren Gurney	Oona Schmidt
Dan Donahue & Nancy Iacomini	Warren Short
Frank & Cyndy Impala	Kevin L. Ogle & Carol Ann Siciliano
Patricia Kime	William & Margaret Teed
Antoinette J. Lee	George Varoutsos
	G. A. Vick

We believe this list is current as of August 31, 2016. If any Life, Business, Donor, or Sponsor Member's name does not appear on this list, the omission is inadvertent. We apologize and ask that you notify the Arlington Historical Society at P.O. Box 100402, Arlington, VA 22210-3402 of the omission.

Financial Information

The Society publishes financial information on its annual results of operations in its newsletter.

I have submitted this report in accordance with the bylaws of the Arlington Historical Society.

Gerald J. Laporte
Secretary
Arlington Historical Society
September 1, 2016