

ARLINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY YEAR IN REVIEW

2016–2017

In 2016-2017, the Arlington Historical Society continued its organized efforts to preserve and promote interest in the history of Arlington County, Virginia, its mission for the past 61 years. This report discusses the Society's activities in various program areas in which it was active during the year.

Arlington Historical Museum. The Arlington Historical Museum is the most ambitious and best-known program of the Arlington Historical Society. The Society has operated this program in the historic Hume School building at 1805 S. Arlington Ridge Road since the early 1960's. The museum contains permanent exhibits on Arlington County history from prehistoric times to the present. It also contains temporary exhibit space. In the year from September 1, 2016 to August 31, 2017, museum docents recorded approximately 500 museum visitors. The museum was open to the public on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons and by appointment, staffed by trained volunteer docents.

An increase in special and temporary exhibits in the last few years has resulted in higher attendance at the Arlington Historical Museum. Increased use of bulk email communications and Facebook posts about new exhibits, as well as improved exterior signage in the past year, also have contributed to higher attendance.

During 2016-2017, the museum staged several temporary exhibits. One celebrated the 150th anniversary of Lomax African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, one of three churches established in Arlington after the Civil War in 1866 for residents of Freedman's Village, a community established for formerly enslaved African-Americans. The exhibit featured artifacts and photographs from the church, including its original pulpit bible. The Society sponsored an exhibit opening reception at the museum, which drew a large crowd.

Another temporary exhibit honored John Glenn, who lived in Arlington during his time as an astronaut in Project Mercury, the United States' first manned space program, when he became the first American to orbit the earth in 1962. Another exhibit remembered the 1966 "gang war" in north Arlington, a battle between rival motorcycle gangs that took place in the parking lot of the

Safeway at Lee Highway and North Harrison Street. A large temporary exhibit focusing on World War I in Arlington opened in April 2017 and will close in November 2018.

Several new permanent exhibits went on display during the past year, and others were freshened or expanded with new artifacts or improved signage and interpretation. For example, a case displaying artifacts for the 19th and early 20th centuries exhibit now includes objects dug up in Rosslyn, including beer bottles, glassware, and gold mining equipment used by gold hunters along the Potomac River. The museum now has a “hands on” interactive section with historic objects children (and adults) can handle. Better lighting was installed for some exhibits.

Since the museum program is operated in an edifice built as the Hume School in 1891 and operated as a school by Arlington County until 1958, a small room on the second floor of the building is set up to resemble a 20th century classroom, primarily to engage child visitors. During the past year, museum staff added a small display case near this room containing objects from the Hume School, including textbooks and student attendance pins.

The Society hosted a number of special programs at the museum in the past year, including the opening reception for the Lomax A.M.E. Zion Church mentioned above and a reception for members of the Society in January 2017. The museum was the location in December 2016 of a celebration marking the end of the archeological dig at the Society’s Ball-Sellers House property, discussed below, and thanking archeological dig volunteers. The Society opens the museum several times a year by appointment to group tours sponsored by various organizations.

As part of its museum program, 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 the Society’s museum collection.

The museum staff maintains 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.

Dr. Mark Benbow, a member of the history faculty at Marymount University, served as Museum Director during the past year. Haley Wallace, a professional curator, was Museum Curator. The museum program was able to provide intern and volunteer opportunities for local college students seeking to fulfill academic requirements and to take advantage of their valuable help.

The Hume School building in which the museum program operates itself is an historic artifact. It is the oldest structure built as a school in Arlington County. The Society preserves the brick building and its grounds and opens them to the public as part of its mission to preserve and promote interest in Arlington County history. During the past year, the Society replaced the shingles on the building's roof, repaired damaged wood, and repainted outside trim. The Hume School building serves as the headquarters of the Society as well housing the museum program.

As they have for the past 12 years, a group of volunteers from the Arlington Ridge Civic Association and other community groups, including young adult singles organizations from local Mormon churches, spent a Saturday in the Fall engaged in a thorough clean-up of the Arlington Historical Museum grounds. The effort was coordinated by neighbor Chick Walter. This civic support for the property contributes greatly to the appearance of the old Hume School and its grounds.

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. The main building on the property includes the John Ball cabin, a one-story log structure with loft built by owner John Ball and his family in the 1740's as a yeoman farmer's house. The building also includes an attached two-story farmhouse built in the early 1880s. The cabin is the oldest building in Arlington County and contains many period elements. The Society maintains displays of historic artifacts inside the cabin. The grounds contain several 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 at least one trained docent when open to the public. In the year from September 1, 2016 to August 31, 2017, the all-volunteer staff counted 572 visitors to the Ball-Sellers House. In the previous year, they had counted 351 visitors. The substantial increase over past years was due primarily to the attraction of the archeological dig described below. An uncounted number of visitors examine the grounds and read the historical marker at the house when volunteers are not on duty.

Docents at the Ball-Sellers House sometimes dress in 18th century colonial attire. At the season opening of the property on April 1, 2017, colonial re-enactor Sandy Newton demonstrated spinning and educated visitors about the two spinning wheels at the house, which are representative of items listed

in John Ball's will as being owned by him at his death in 1766. Two docents were in colonial attire and baked sweet treats for visitors on that day.

An archeological excavation started in August 2016 had dominated the previous open season at the Ball-Sellers House. Many visitors had come to observe the excavation in progress.

The excavation was undertaken to search for remains of the east wing addition to the John Ball cabin, which had been demolished by 1920. The dig was undertaken in connection with a planned installation of a rain garden on the site. The rain garden was designed to improve water flow away from the historic foundation of the John Ball cabin.

The archeological excavation continued for four months, led by volunteer archaeologist Patrick L. O'Neill. Dr. O'Neill and fellow members of the Archaeological Society of Virginia donated hundreds of hours of their expertise. Over 100 other volunteers donated almost 2,000 hours of their time to the project. Three local high schools brought history students to tour the site and participate in the project. Anthropology and archeology majors from local universities gained experience needed for their academic requirements.

The archeological excavation unearthed thousands of artifacts, including pieces of a two-foot tall earthen jug made in the late 18th or early 19th century. Dr. O'Neill identified three historic drainage systems that date back to the mid-18th century and the early days of the John Ball cabin. Volunteers are now in the process of cleaning and documenting artifacts unearthed in the excavation on the lower level of the Arlington Historical Museum.

In March 2017, Dr. O'Neill and Ms. Benbow gave a presentation on the archeological project to the Glencarlyn Civic Association, which consists of residents of the neighborhood where the house museum is located. In June 2017, the Ball-Sellers House hosted Dr. O'Neill's Northern Virginia Community College archaeology class for an onsite lecture on the archaeological project and a tour of the property.

The excavation enabled the Society to determine the outline of the demolished east wing addition to the John Ball cabin. The rain garden was built to include a stonewall depicting the outline. The garden, which includes conservation landscaping, was installed at the beginning of the 2017 season and was featured on the June 4 Arlington County Green Home and Garden Tour.

The Ball-Sellers House hosted a number of other group tours in the last year. In September 2016, two classes from Rivendell Elementary School visited. The staff of the Claude Moore Colonial Farm in neighboring McLean visited in

February 2017. They were replacing the roof of a farmhouse on their property and were conducting research on the original roof of the John Ball cabin to replicate it. In April 2017, the Arlington Questors and Arlington County Encore Learning local history class visited. The Arlington Women's Club toured the property in May 2017.

Public Lectures, Panel Discussions, and Tours. The Society continued its tradition of sponsoring public lectures or panel discussions and tours to preserve and promote interest in Arlington history over the past year. Some of the programs were presented as part of the Society's membership meetings, held on the second Thursday of September, November, January, March, and May. Others were standalone lecture or panel discussion programs. Unless otherwise noted below, programs held during the school year were held at Marymount University's main campus on North Glebe Road and Old Dominion Drive. Programs during the summer months were held at the Arlington Central Library. All lectures and panel discussions sponsored by the Society are summarized in the periodic newsletter sent to members of the Society.

On September 8, 2016, Dean DeRosa gave a presentation on how the oldest portions of Arlington National Cemetery appeared in their first years compared to how they look today. Mr. DeRosa used stereographic photographs from about 1870 and modern photographs to illustrate his lecture.

Dr. Mark Benbow, professor of history at Marymount University and Museum Director of the Arlington Historical Society, gave a lecture on October 13, 2016 on Federal Government investigations of German espionage activity in the Washington, D.C. area during World War I.

Toby McIntosh, an Arlington journalist, gave a lecture on November 10, 2016 on the seven Auriel Bessemer murals that hang in the lobby of Arlington's main post office in Clarendon. Mr. McIntosh recently authored and published a fine art book on the subject. The murals depict scenes from Virginia history and were commissioned by New Deal Works Progress Administration in the 1930s, when the post office was built.

January 11, 2017 witnessed a lecture entitled "Alexandria County, the War of 1812, and the Battle of the White House" by Dr. Patrick O'Neill, who had served as principal archeologist at the Ball-Sellers House archeological excavation during 2016. Alexandria County, of course, was the name of Arlington County from 1801 to 1920, when the War of 1812 took place.

The Society's combined membership meeting and public program on February 9, 2017 featured a panel discussion about the histories of three African-

American churches founded in Arlington in 1866, Calloway United Methodist, Lomax A.M.E. Zion, and Mt. Zion Baptist. Each congregation had recently celebrated its 150th anniversary with special events. Representatives of each of the churches comprised the panel. A large crowd of 175 people attended the program.

On March 9, 2017, the Society sponsored a lecture on Alexander Robey Shepherd, frequently referred to as “Boss Shepherd,” who was responsible for building much of the modern infrastructure of Washington, D.C. in the 1870s. The lecture was given by John P. Richardson, President of the Society from 2013 to 2015, who authored and recently published a book on Boss Shepherd. Among other accomplishments, Robey’s work brought to realization much of the vision of Pierre L’Enfant, who designed the original plan for the federal capital city that later became Washington, D.C. L’Enfant’s grave is on the lawn of Arlington House, overlooking the city whose plan he designed.

The Society sponsored a lecture on April 13, 2017 featuring Dr. Cindy Gueli, author of a book entitled *Lipstick Brigade: The Untold Story of Washington’s WWII Government Girls*. Dr. Gueli talked about the lives of the approximately 200,000 young women who came to the Washington, D.C. area during World War II to provide clerical assistance at Federal Government agencies, especially the War Department headquartered in the Pentagon. Many of these young women lived and worked in Arlington. Many eventually settled here and in other areas of metropolitan Washington, D.C.

On May 7, 2017, the Society sponsored its annual George Washington’s Forest guided walking tour, led by local historian Kevin Vincent. The tour began at the Ball-Sellers House and visited the survey markers used by George Washington in 1785 to survey the 1200 acres now in Arlington that he had purchased before the Revolutionary War, a D.C. boundary stone, and the site of a mill built by George Washington’s step-grandson. The tour attracted a record 42 participants this year.

At its annual meeting on May 11, 2017, the Society heard from local resident Jessica Kaplan on the experiences of brothers James and Lewis Marcey during the Civil War. The Marceys were farmers who owned land on either side of what is now Military Road in Arlington. Military Road was built between their properties during that conflict. Their families suffered extreme hardship during the war. Ms. Kaplan had published an article on this topic, which was based on original research, in the 2016 edition of *The Arlington Historical Magazine* published by the Society.

Lt. Col. Robert J. Darling, USMC (Ret.) was the featured speaker at the Society's annual awards event at the Army-Navy Country Club on June 6, 2017. This event included a gala reception replacing the traditional annual banquet. Col. Darling, author of *24 Hours Inside the President's Bunker, 9/11/01*, spoke of his experiences as a supporting military officer inside the Presidential Emergency Operations Center on September 11, 2001. The event also included an address by Dr. Allison Finkelstein on the Arlington World War I Commemoration Task Force, which she chairs. Highlights of this event are available for viewing on YouTube through Arlington TV at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24b_G71Lp_o and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_1Z4D0H8b4.

On June 8, 2017, the Society sponsored a lecture on the history of Theodore Roosevelt Island by National Park Service Cultural Resources Specialist Bradley Krueger. Although technically located in the District of Columbia (and in Maryland before 1790), the 88-acre island's closer proximity to Arlington and Virginia have long led to its association with those jurisdictions, at least in the minds of the public. The audience sat spellbound as Mr. Krueger recounted the fascinating history of the island from its inhabitation by Native Americans to its use as a summer mansion by the family of John Mason (son of the Gunston Hall owner who conceived of our Bill of Rights), a retreat for the wealthy, a training ground for soldiers, and a memorial to our 26th president.

Journalist and local historian Charlie Clark was the featured speaker at a program sponsored by the Society on July 13, 2017 at Marymount University's main campus. Mr. Clark's topic was vanished businesses in Arlington. Mr. Clark, who grew up in North Arlington in the 1950s and 1960s, structured his talk by discussing various types of businesses—such as hardware stores, restaurants, theaters, ice cream parlors, clothing stores, and drug stores. He evoked many fond memories from the clearly delighted crowd.

Historic Preservation Advocacy. The Society considers advocacy for the preservation of buildings, properties, archeological resources, and artifacts that are important to Arlington County's history to be part of its mission to preserve and promote interest in that history. Officers and directors of the Society are in regular contact with Arlington County's Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board with the county government's Historic Preservation Office about historic preservation matters.

During the past year, officers, directors and members of the Society were active in efforts to preserve the burial ground of the Robert Ball, Sr. family at Fairfax Drive and North Stafford Street in the Ballston neighborhood of Arlington, on the grounds of Central United Methodist Church. The Society sent

a letter dated October 27, 2016 to the Arlington County Board saying that the Society firmly believed the story told by the Ball family graveyard was worth telling at the historic site of the burial ground. It also sent a letter dated the same date to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources expressing similar views. On March 1, 2017, the Arlington County Board was responsive to the Society's concerns when it voted unanimously to designate the Ball family burial ground as a local historic district, preserving the site for future generations.

Community Outreach and Support. On June 3, 2017, volunteers from the Society dressed in colonial attire participated in the annual Glencarlyn Day festivities, including walking in the community parade, for the second year in a row. Their participation demonstrated solidarity with the community in which the Society's house museum known as the Ball-Sellers House is located.

The Society set up displays on Arlington history at a number of community events over the year. The Society set up a booth at Clarendon Day, Arlington's biggest street festival, on September 17, 2016. The booth gave volunteers staffing the booth an opportunity to "talk Arlington history" with festival goers who stopped by.

Several volunteers from the Society staffed a booth at the Arlington Cares volunteer fair on July 25, 2017.

From August 18 to 20, 2017, the Society set up and staffed an indoor booth at the Arlington County Fair. The booth featured a history quiz and historic maps of Arlington on which fair goers could find their homes. It also included a face-in-hole figure that could be used to take a photograph of a fair goer as a Union soldier that manned Arlington's forts during the Civil War. On one evening, author Charlie Clark signed copies of his latest book *The Hidden History of Arlington County* at the booth.

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 November 17, 2016 at Culpepper Garden Senior Center, on May 24, 2017 at Lee Community Center, and on June 6, 2017 at Arlington Mill Community Center, Karl VanNewkirk, a member of the Society's board of directors and frequent lecturer on Arlington County history, gave illustrated lectures on that topic to interested groups. On March 1, 2017, Mr. VanNewkirk was interviewed by WUSA-9 for a television broadcast on the newly installed historical marker at the Hall's Hill "segregation wall." On May 2017, Mr. VanNewkirk, Annette Benbow, and Dr. Mark Benbow were interviewed by several high school students who made a half-hour television

documentary on the impact of World War I on Arlington to be shown on Arlington Independent Media. During the year, Dr. Benbow spoke to the Westover Village Civic Association and in November 2016 to the Kiwanis Club of South Arlington on the work of the Society. On August 11, 2017, board member Tom Dickinson led a bus tour of Arlington County historical sites for personnel from across the Arlington Public Schools district, including stops at the Arlington Historical Museum and Ball-Sellers House.

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, Interstate Highway I-66 in Arlington, the U.S. Marine Corps (Iwo Jima) Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery, and Theodore Roosevelt Island.

Research, Publishing and Book Sales.

During the year, the Society refreshed and substantially improved 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 makes available video recordings of many of the lectures it has sponsored on YouTube through the website of Arlington TV at <https://www.youtube.com/user/arlingtoncounty/search?query=historical>. 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 2,881 people. During the year, the Society added a Twitter account (@ArlHist) to its social media presence.

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.

For the fifth consecutive year, the Society sponsored a history essay contest in cooperation with Columbia Masonic Lodge No. 285 of Arlington. The contest was open to all high school students living or attending school in Arlington. The assigned topic was “Was Crandall Mackey successful in his quest to clean up Arlington in the Progressive Era from 1890 to 1920 and

did Arlington continue this social activism through the 1900s?" Savannah Landefeld of Yorktown High School was selected as winner of this year's historical essay contest. Ben McCracken of Washington–Lee High School won second prize with an equally fine essay. Savannah's winning essay is included in this 2017 issue of *The Arlington Historical Magazine*.

The Society published issue No. 4, Volume 15 of *The Arlington Historical Magazine* in late 2016. 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 seven articles and was 88 pages in length, a record for the publication. The magazine also contained reports on the work of the Society during 2015-2016. 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 three issues of its periodic newsletter in 2016-2017. The newsletter primarily contained notices of upcoming events on Arlington history and short articles on recent lecture programs and other events sponsored by the Society or in which officers and directors of the Society actively participated. The newsletter was sent by mail to all members of the Society.

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, but were given this year at the gala reception and lecture program that replaced the banquet in June 2017, as described above. The Society presented its Cornelia B. Rose Award, for contributions to Arlington County history, to Judith Knudsen for her work over 20 years as manager of the Center for Local History at the Arlington Central Library. The Society presented its Volunteer of the Year Award to Dr. Max L. Gross, who has served as editor of *The Arlington Historical Magazine* for the past three years.

Membership. The Society maintains the following categories of membership: Life (one-time dues payment of \$1,000 by an individual), 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, 2017, the Society had 389 memberships, many of which were

recorded in the names of two individuals. Current Life, Business, Donor and Sponsor Members are:

Life Members

Kathleen Ausley	Eleanor Hunter
A M. Barr	Isabel Kaldenbach
Greg Bayens	Tom & Barbara Kelley
James Berkey	Martha A. Klein
Carol Laikin Carpenter	Daniel Koski-Karell
Jane Patrick Casey	Michelle A. Krowl
Charles & Beverley Kelly Casserly	Margaret Lampe
Susan Christopher	Anna Belle Lane
Loretta V. Cleek	Melvin W. Little
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Susan A. Dennis	Mrs. Alta Parker
George W. Dodge	King Prather
Margaret Fisher	William & Annette Reilly
Ellen Ford	Michael P. Rose
Edwin Fountain	Libby Ross
Daun Thomas Frankland	Sheryl Scull
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John & Suzanne Courtright	Carlyle Lash

Denny Truesdale & Jerilyn Levi
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 Paxton Baker & Nancy Lowenthal
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 David & Conchita Mitchell
 Joan Morgan
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 Mary Jane Nelson & John Niehaus
 Nicholas & Kristen Noble
 David North
 Diane Schug-O'Neill &
 Patrick O'Neill

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 Mary Niebuhr
 Michael O'Connor
 Michelle Orsi
 Joseph & Eloise Pelton
 Diane H. Perry
 Elizabeth & Erik Rasmussen
 Scott Schless
 Warren Short
 Rip Sullivan
 Tania Talento
 William and Margaret Teed
 Tom & Mary Margaret Whipple