

ARLINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY YEAR IN REVIEW

2018–2019

This report discusses activities of the Arlington Historical Society in various program areas during the fiscal and program year July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019. These activities helped the Society advance its mission since its founding in 1956 of preserving and promoting Arlington County history.

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 pre-Columbian times, when Native Americans inhabited the area, to the terrorist attack on the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. The museum also displays temporary exhibits.

In the past year, the museum was open to the public on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday afternoons, staffed by trained volunteer docents. The Society also opens the museum by appointment, primarily for group tours, including student groups from Arlington schools and other educational organizations.

The Society recorded approximately 500 museum visitors for the year. In recent years, the Society and museum staff have increased their use of social media such as Facebook in efforts to promote and increase attendance at the museum.

The museum has a "hands on" interactive section with historic objects that children (and adults) can handle, part of its efforts to attract families and young children. Since the museum program operates in a building constructed in 1891 and operated as a public school by Arlington County until 1958, a small room on the second floor of the building is set up to resemble a early 20th century classroom, another effort to engage younger visitors.

During 2018-2019, the museum continued to present its exhibit on the Arlington servicemen killed in World War I as part of the Society's commemoration of the centenary of that conflict. The museum staff also mounted a temporary exhibit for the winter holidays displaying kitchen implements from the 1890s that would have been in use to prepare holiday meals. The exhibit was entitled "Arlington Holiday Kitchens."

Starting in February 2019, the museum displayed an exhibit commemorating the 60th anniversary of public school desegregation in Virginia. Arlington's Stratford Junior High School had been the first public school in Virginia to desegregate in 1959. The exhibit contained artifacts, including personal photographs and material from the multiple court cases brought by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) that eventually forced Virginia public schools to desegregate. Many of the artifacts had been loaned to the Society by members of the Dorothy Hamm family, which had been active with others for years to force desegregation of public schools in Arlington County.

In the summer of 2019, the museum staged a temporary exhibit featuring seldom displayed artifacts representing the breadth and diversity of Arlington history. The exhibit was curated by the Society's Museum Curator, Haley Wallace.

The Hume School building in which the museum program operates itself is an historic artifact on the National Register of Historic Places. It is the oldest structure built as a school in Arlington County. The Society preserves the brick building and its grounds and keeps them open to the public free of charge 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 part of its museum program, the Society works with public agencies and private organizations to organize exhibits on Arlington County history outside of the Hume School building, sometimes loaning artifacts from the Society's museum collection.

Dr. Mark Benbow, Associate Professor of American History at Marymount University, served as Museum Director during the past year. Robert White oversaw maintenance and repair of the Hume School building.

As they have for the past 15 years, a group of volunteers from the Arlington Ridge Civic Association and other community groups, including young adult singles organizations from local Churches of Latter Day Saints, spent a Saturday in the fall of 2018 in a clean-up of the museum grounds. The effort was coordinated by neighbors Chick Walter and Rich Kelly. This civic support for the property contributes greatly to the appearance of the Hume School grounds.

The Arlington Historical Museum participated in the nationwide "Bells for Peace" program by ringing the Hume School bell eleven times on November 11, 2018 to commemorate the centennial of the end of World War I.

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 log house, a one-story structure with a loft and root cellar that was built in the 1740s by owner John Ball and his wife, Elizabeth, and family as a yeoman farmer's house. The building also includes an attached two-story house built in the 1880s. The original log house is the oldest building in Arlington County. It contains many period elements. The grounds contain two smaller historic accessory structures. The Ball-Sellers House is on the National Register of Historic Places.

During the 2018-2019 year, the Society opened the John Ball house to the public on Saturdays from April to October and by appointment. The Society maintains displays in the house of historic artifacts and reproductions of period-appropriate furniture, clothing, and household goods. The Society operates the Ball-Sellers House through a committee chaired by Annette Benbow.

The Society staffs the Ball-Sellers House with at least one trained docent when open to the public. All docents are volunteers. In the 2018-2019 year, the Society recorded approximately 325 visitors to the Ball-Sellers House. An unrecorded number of visitors read the historical marker at the house and examine the grounds when volunteers are not on duty.

Docents at the Ball-Sellers House sometimes dress in 18th century colonial attire. On opening day in 2019, members of the Monumental City Ancient Fife and Drum Corps performed colonial era music and talked to the crowd about music and musical instruments from the period. Re-enactors demonstrated tools and equipment that John and Elizabeth Ball would have used.

The Ball-Sellers House hosted several group tours in the last year, including a session of Encore Learning's class on Arlington local history and a tour for a family group of descendants of John Ball's brother and neighbor, Moses Ball. The Ball-Sellers House again partnered with the Arlington Food Assistance Center to manage the vegetable garden on the property. All crops that are harvested are donated as food for Arlington's neediest residents.

Public Events.

The Society continued sponsoring regular public lectures, panel discussions, tours, and other events about Arlington history over the past year. Lectures and panel discussions were held monthly except in August and December at the main campus of Marymount University on North Glebe Road and Old Dominion Drive.

To continue the commemoration of the centenary of World War I though the 100th anniversary of the war's end in November 2018, the Society hosted World War I aerial historian Steve Suddaby on July 12, 2018. Mr. Suddaby discussed the historic implications of the Wright brothers' demonstration flights at Fort Myer and the impact of these flights on World War I airplane development.

On October 11, 2018, the Society hosted a panel discussion on the integration of Arlington public school sports starting in 1959. The panel featured a large number of Arlington athletes and was moderated by former Washington-Lee High School football standout and Pittsburgh Steeler Reggie Harrison. Male and female athletes, black and white, shared personal perspectives on playing sports in newly desegregated formerly all-white high schools.

On November 8, 2018, former Fort Myer historian Kim Holien discussed the history of that Army post, starting with its foundation during the Civil War. He cited little known facts about Fort Myer, including unusual ties to famous people.

On December 10, 2018, the Society sponsored an AHS members' reception at the Westover branch of the Arlington Public Library in connection with the opening of an art exhibit of Tom Dickinson's work entitled "Windows to the Past—Arlington Then and Now." Tom is an AHS board member and former AHS president. The exhibit was a compilation and comparative arrangement of historical photographs of residential and commercial buildings in Arlington that have been demolished over the years and of the structures that replaced them in the same location. Tom framed the photos with old wooden window frames that Tom salvaged from demolished homes. The exhibit was on display at the Westover library from November 2018 to January 2019.

On January 10, 2019, Garrett Peck, a local author and historian, spoke about the history of the Potomac River and its impact on Arlington.

On February 14, 2019, the Society hosted a panel discussion entitled "Forging the Way to Desegregation" to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the racial desegregation of Arlington Public Schools. The panel consisted of Bernard Hamm, who was among the first African-American students to apply to attend white Arlington public schools, three years before desegregation occurred; Kimberly Springle, Director of the Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives in Washington, D.C., who discussed education for African-American students in the Washington area; Dr. Erin Devlin, Professor of American History at Mary Washington University, who spoke of the implications today of school desegregation; and Cathy Hix, retired head of the Social Studies

Program of Arlington Public Schools, who spoke about how teachers today educate students about the history of Virginia public school desegregation.

Local historian Kathryn Holt Springston spoke on March 14, 2019 about Arlington's Sears kit houses. She cited examples of the houses and advised attendees how to identify if they own one.

On April 11, 2019, author Wilma Jones spoke about the history and community of Hall's Hill in Arlington. She shared her earliest recollections of growing up in the black enclave in north Arlington and how residents supported one another.

The Society's annual meeting on May 9, 2019 included a lecture by Johnathan Thomas on the history of the Washington Golf and Country Club.

On May 11, 2019, Kevin Vincent led the Society's annual George Washington's Forest History Walk with more than 50 attendees. The walk started at the Ball-Sellers House and covered about three miles. It highlighted the historic survey conducted in 1785 by George Washington and Moses Ball of their adjacent tracts of land in what is now Arlington. As mentioned above, Moses Ball was the brother and neighbor of John Ball, who built the log cabin that is now part of the Ball-Sellers House.

Over the years, the Society customarily has presented honorary awards for contributions to the preservation and promotion of Arlington County history and to the Society itself. These awards typically are conferred at the Society's annual banquet. The Society's banquet was held at the Washington Golf and Country Club on May 16, 2019 this year and was well attended. The banquet commemorated the 60th Anniversary of the desegregation of Arlington public schools. The keynote speaker was nationally known author James McGrath Morris. Morris spoke about his research and publication on efforts to desegregate Arlington public schools.

At the banquet, the Society presented its Cornelia B. Rose, Jr. Award, for contributions to Arlington County history, to the family of Dorothy M. and E. Leslie Hamm, Sr. Mr. and Mrs. Hamm were African-American equal rights and quality education activists in Arlington in the 1950s and 1960s. Their family was recognized for the foresight Mr. and Mrs. Hamm demonstrated in saving detailed records of their historic equal rights and quality education activities so that historians of the future would be able to tell that important story. Mr. Hamm died in 2013; Mrs. Hamm died in 2004. Their children, Edward Leslie, Jr., Bernard, and Carmela Hamm, were present at the banquet and were recognized for sharing their family's records, knowledge of Arlington history, and other talents with the Arlington Historical Society, the Black

Heritage Museum of Arlington, and others attempting to tell the story of the African-American equal rights and quality education activities in which their family historically participated.

At the banquet, the Society presented its Volunteer of the Year Award to Robert White, who has provided his prodigious skills in maintaining, repairing and preserving the Hume School building that houses the Arlington Historical Museum. In addition, Robert has served as a docent coordinator for the museum and volunteer coordinator for AHS, and has often taken the lead in the Society's community outreach efforts.

On June 13, 2019, Arlington County Historic Preservation Office staff members Serena Bolliger and Angelina Jones traced Arlington history through examples of Arlington's local historic districts. They also discussed the Arlington County historic preservation program and its challenges in Arlington's rapidly changing environment.

Historic Preservation Advocacy.

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

During the past year, the AHS Historic Preservation Committee, under the leadership of Tom Dickinson, was actively involved in efforts to preserve the following properties in Arlington:

- Westover Apartments—The remaining two-story 8- and 10-unit World War II-era garden-style apartment buildings in this complex are subject to a request to have them designated as a local historic district. The complex is located near the intersection of Washington Boulevard and Patrick Henry Drive in North Arlington. Historic designation would encourage the building owners to preserve and remodel the historic structures rather than demolish them.
- Birchwood—This historic property located at 4576 N. 26th Street was built with logs from a cabin built about 1836 and added to about 10 years later. An Arlington County historic marker is onsite. The house has been under threat of destruction since its sale by a long-time owner/occupant several years ago.

Community Outreach.

Several AHS board members continued their participation in the Arlington County World War I Commemoration Task Force, which helped plan events for the centenary of the conflict from 2017 to 2018 and raised money to place historical markers at the Clarendon Circle War Memorial. Karl VanNewkirk served as the Society's representative on the task force. Mark Benbow and Tom Dickinson served as at-large members and Cathy Hix served as a representative of Arlington Public Schools.

In August 2018, the Society set up and staffed an indoor booth at the Arlington County Fair. The booth featured a history quiz and historical maps on which fair goers could find their homes. Charlie Clark signed his new book "The Hidden History of Arlington County" at the AHS booth. Many fair goers stopped by to inquire about membership in the Society, take the quiz, buy a book, or just talk about history.

On February 2019, board member Karl VanNewkirk met with Chet Travieso to discuss and provide input to his project regarding "Segregation Walls" across the nation, and particularly the one in Arlington's Halls Hill neighborhood.

In early May 2019, the Society set up a table staffed by volunteers at Potomac Overlook Park's May Day celebration. The volunteers highlighted the history of the park area for visitors and provided information about the Society.

On June 8, 2019, for the fourth year in a row, volunteers from the Society dressed in colonial attire participated in the annual Glencarlyn Day festivities, including walking in the community parade. Their participation demonstrated solidarity with the community in which the Society's house museum known as the Ball-Sellers House is located.

Gerry Laporte, an officer and director of the Society, served as the representative of the Society on the Arlington County Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board, as he has since 2001.

The Society maintains a speakers' bureau of members prepared to make presentations on Arlington history to outside groups. Presentations made during the 2018-2019 year include:

- On July 18, 2018, Annette Benbow spoke to an audience at the Aurora Hills branch of the Arlington Public Library about Julie K. (Rhinehart) Powell, an owner of the Ball-Sellers House from 1920 until her death in 1957. Ms. Powell was one of the first female sailors in U.S. history, having enlisted during World War I under the official designation "Yeoman (F)," whose enlistees were popularly referred to as "yeomanettes" at the time.

- On September 17, 2018, Karl VanNewkirk presented “A Brief History of Arlington” to a group of seniors at Arlington Mill Community Center.
- On October 3, 2018, Karl VanNewkirk gave a presentation on Dawson Terrace to a group of seniors at Aurora Hills Senior Center.
- On November 20, 2018, Tom Dickinson spoke to the Arlington Rotary Club about Arlington history.
- Karl VanNewkirk gave a talk on “Prehistoric Arlington” to a group of seniors at Langston Brown Community Center on March 19, 2019.
- On April 1, 2019, Karl VanNewkirk talked in Carlin Hall about “General” Samuel Burdette and the founding of the Glencarlyn Library to the members of the Glencarlyn Civic Association.
- In June 2019, Tom Dickinson spoke to the Bethesda- Chevy Chase (Md.) Historical Society about his photo exhibit “Windows to the Past—Arlington Then and Now,” discussed above.
- Tom Dickinson also spoke to the Rosslyn Rotary Club twice during the year, the first time in 2018 when he gave an overview of Arlington’s history and linkages to the Potomac River, and a second time in 2019 on his photo exhibit “Windows to the Past—Arlington Then and Now.”

The Society regularly serves as a resource on local history for the Arlington County and Federal Governments and local businesses and organizations. 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 several federal installations.

The Society donated the annual fee of \$200 to Civil War Trails, Inc. to maintain, market, and administer that organization’s interpretive sign at the historic site of Freedman’s Village in Arlington.

Research, Publishing and Book Sales.

During the year, the Society continued to maintain its website at 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 through its website video recordings of lectures and panel discussions it has sponsored and other local history recordings. In addition, the website offers access to photographs portraying Arlington history. The Society also maintains a Facebook page with daily postings on “this day in Arlington history,” as well as other postings on Arlington history. The Facebook page currently was “liked” by 4,643 users by the end of the

year. The Society's Twitter account (#ArlHist) increased its followers to 242 during the year.

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 and online through its website. The Society also displayed and sold some publications at community outreach events.

For the seventh 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 students in 8th through 12th grades living or attending school in Arlington. The assigned topic was "The Impact of Streams in the Area Currently Known as Arlington." Unfortunately, no prizeworthy entries were received, so no prizes were awarded.

The Society published issue Volume 16, No. 2, of *The Arlington Historical Magazine* in late 2018. 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 and was a record 92 pages in length. The magazine also contained a report on the work of the Society during 2017-2018. 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 four issues of its periodic newsletter in 2018-2019. The newsletter contained notices of upcoming events on Arlington history. It also included short articles on recent lecture programs and other events and exhibits sponsored by the Society and vignettes on Arlington history. The newsletter was sent by mail to all members of the Society and was posted 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.