



# Arlington Historical Society

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Arlington Historical Society  
June 2021

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### Arlington Historical Museum

1805 South Arlington Ridge Road  
Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays  
1:00 - 4:00 PM

### Ball-Sellers House

Has Reopened!  
5620 3rd Street, South  
Saturdays from 1:00-4:00 PM  
through the end of October

### Virtual AHS

Website: <https://arlingtonhistorical-society.org>  
Facebook: Arlington Historical Society  
Twitter: #ArlingtonHistory  
Instagram: ArlingtonHistory

### AHS Board Meeting

Board meetings are on the fourth Tuesday of every month using a combination of face-to-face and virtual means. The meetings are open to the public, please let us know in advance if you plan to attend.

## President's Dispatch

Despite the isolation that the pandemic created over the last 15 months, one positive aspect has been amazing community support. Neighbors have reached out to each other for care and comfort. Online communities have provided support. The Arlington Historical Society has known all along how wonderful neighbors can be. We have been fortunate to have some amazing neighbors support us since we became a society in the 1950s.

“Chick” Walter, coordinator of Friends of the Hume School, is one such neighbor. Since 2005, he has coordinated twice a year, an event to keep our museum grounds attractive. His crew of volunteers includes members of the Church of the Latter-Day Saints and a senior neighborhood group. In addition to these clean-up events, FNU LNU makes sure the museum lawn is regularly mowed and trimmed. All help keep the museum grounds in beautiful condition.

Another great neighbor is the Aurora Hills Women's Club. AHS and other Arlington non-profits are the beneficiaries of their generosity. Through the activities of this club, such as selling wreaths during the holidays, they have made financial contributions over the past decades that have allowed us to address maintenance issues in the museum. For example, just recently, we were able to use their donation to repair our air conditioning in preparation for a summer re-opening.

We are equally cared for by the neighbors of the Glencarlyn neighborhood where our Ball-Sellers house museum is located. Friends of Urban Agriculture, and before them the Arlington Food Assistance Center, tend the vegetable garden in near eighteenth century style to provide food for Arlington's neediest while blending in with the oldest house in the county. The Glencarlyn Civic Association has long partnered with the Ball-Sellers House to co-host events and look out for each other.

AHS is now at a crossroads as we embark on a preservation/renovation project at the Arlington Historical Museum, previously known as the Hume School (see article in this newsletter). We are going to need partners throughout the county for this effort. The Warren G. Stambaugh Foundation has already stepped up. They partnered with us last fall to hold an event that raised money and allowed us to hire a local firm to conduct a feasibility study of the museum. Our next steps will be to seek partners as we kick off a capital fundraising campaign. With the help of strong partners, we can make this project a reality and the Arlington Historical Museum at Hume School will be able to continue to share the story of Arlington for decades to come.

*Cathy Bonnell-Hix*

## Upcoming AHS Events

**July 4, 1:00 PM**

### **(LIVE!) Reopening Celebration of the Arlington Historical Museum!**

*1805 South Arlington Ridge Road*

*Free, Open to the Public*



Fanfare, food, and fun at the opening of the AHS museum, including a new exhibit on Upton's Hill, a behind-the-scenes guided tour, and reenactors in a Civil War encampment along with dignitaries and

**July 8, 7:00 PM**

### **(Virtual): Uncovering Alexandria's Waterfront**

Register: <https://forms.gle/eidsSHbiGfrVQcEx8>



Alexandria archaeologist Dr. Benjamin Skolnik will discuss discoveries on the waterfront in Old Town Alexandria including four ships and an intricate network of wharves.

### **AHS Scavenger Hunt Coming in July**



During July, AHS will launch its annual scavenger hunt. With questions for young and old, this contest encourages Arlingtonians to get out and

learn about their county. All entries are put in a drawing for a prize. Details can be found at:

<https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/education/>

### **August 12, 7:00 PM: (Virtual): The Arlington Line: Civil War Defenses**

Register: <https://forms.gle/aV6NfkPTD9Rhv4696>



Fort C. F. Smith Park historian, John McNair, will describe how the Union built a ring of defenses during the Civil War.

## September 9, 2021

### **The Annual Arlington Historical Society Banquet**

### **Honoring Arlington's First Responders on the Twentieth Anniversary of 9/11**

Washington Golf and Country Club

6:00 PM

Reception and Dinner

### **Keynote Speakers**

**James Schwartz**

1st Responder in Charge at the Pentagon

**Ron Carlee**

County Manager, 2001-2009

This year we commemorate the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attack on the Pentagon. Eyewitnesses and first responders will recount their experiences as we honor the resilience of our community.

*Watch your inbox and mailbox for more details on all these events or visit the AHS Events Page: <https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/events/>*

## AHS in the Community Spring 2021

Over the past few months, AHS has shared Arlington history through multiple events. These events included:

- On March 25<sup>th</sup> to help commemorate Women’s History Month, Annette Benbow gave a virtual presentation to an Arlington 55+ audience on “Three Women Trailblazers of the Ball-Sellers House.”
- AHA hosted an April 8th virtual event on Rediscovering Upton’s Hill History. This presentation by Arlington resident and historian Peter Vaselopulos shared the historical significance of that area during the Civil War. The event was recorded and can be viewed on the AHS website at <https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/2021/04/rediscovering-uptons-hill-history-2021/>
- On May 13th AHS hosted a virtual presentation on the history of the Arlington Historical Museum, its roots as the Hume School, and future preservation and renovation plans featuring Museum Director, Dr. Mark Benbow and AHS President Cathy Hix. This presentation can be viewed on the AHS website at: <https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/2021/05/hume-school-past-present-and-future-2021/>
- On June 2<sup>nd</sup>, Dr. Mark Benbow spoke to the Arlington Chapter of Soroptimist International on the history of the Hume School.
- On June 10<sup>th</sup>, AHS hosted a virtual presentation on the Frasers of Green Valley with speaker Martin Suydam.
- On June 23<sup>rd</sup> the Arlington Neighborhood Village non-profit organization hosted Annette Benbow who spoke about the Arlington Historical Society, our two museums, and the many ways that AHS carries out its mission to build community through an understanding of our history.
- AHS partnered with the Cherrydale-Columbia Masonic Lodge to sponsor an essay contest for Arlington students in grades 8-12. This year’s topic focuses on the 20th anniversary of 9/11 in Arlington.
- AHS President Cathy Hix served on the Arlington County Centennial Committee to plan events celebrating the history of the county.

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### Asian-American Immigration in Arlington

*Arlington residents come from all over the world. In honor of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage month, we share the immigration story of many of Arlington’s Asian Americans. This article was written by Anuj Khemka, high school student and former winner of the AHS essay contest.*

As of 2017, one in ten Arlingtonians identify themselves as Asian-American, giving the county the sixth-highest concentration of Asian-Americans in Virginia. However, it has been over 45 years since Arlington experienced its first surge of Asian immigrants and the county and its Asian-American population have shared a tumultuous relationship. From restaurants to schools, Asian-Americans have left a truly tangible impact on Arlington, but along the way, factors such as rent and racism have continuously threatened to hinder progress.

Arlington’s initial wave of Asian immigration started to arrive in the mid-1970s with the end of the Vietnam War. Fearing punishment from the newly established communist government, more than a hundred thousand people from Vietnam and neighboring Southeast nations sought refuge in the United States. For many incoming war refugees, Arlington’s proximity to the capital as well the availability of refugee sponsors, made it the ideal location. By 1978, nearly 15% of the entire Vietnamese population in the US had settled in Arlington and Northern Virginia.

This influx of immigration to Arlington formed an enclave in Clarendon. The area had fallen into decline since the mid-1900s and low rent prices enabled Vietnamese immigrants to transform dilapidated warehouses into bustling grocery stores, restaurants, and gift shops. Within just a few years of the Vietnam War’s end, Clarendon became reinvigorated, transforming from a land of vacant storefronts and neglected buildings into “Little Saigon.”

Soon, a second wave of Asian immigration—still mostly from Southeast Asian nations—streamed into Arlington. From 1978 to the mid-1980s, more than 280,000 Vietnamese refugees came to the United States by boat. Though the vast majority of these immigrants were economically impoverished—a stark difference from the well-connected and well-off immigrants that comprised the first wave—Arlington, with its already-established enclave of immigration, remained an attractive option for



settlement. By 1981, buoyed largely by activity in Arlington's Little Saigon, Virginia had the 8th highest refugee population in the nation.

As Arlington's Asian-American population continued to boom, the government hurried to adapt. English as a Second Language (ESL) classes grew to support an influx of Southeast Asian refugees, and from 1975 to 1976, Vietnamese was one of the three most spoken primary languages in Arlington ESL classes. Meanwhile, the county dedicated further resources to its Refugee Education and Employment Program (REEP), designed to teach language and life skills to newly arrived refugees.

Although the government remained determined to aid its burgeoning Asian-American population, large segments of Arlington's public were firmly opposed to ongoing changes. Citizens publicly complained that Vietnamese refugees had become a burden on Arlington taxpayers. Overtly racist comments were not missing either, with Arlington-born residents in refugee-dominated apartment complexes and shops in Little Saigon frequently expressing their disdain over the county's rapidly expanding Asian-American population.



Though Arlington's Vietnamese enclave withstood the anti-Asian sentiments of some Arlington residents, the opening of a Clarendon Metro station in 1979 proved too much for Little Saigon to overcome. When the area unveiled the new station, it repositioned Clarendon as an attractive hub of economic opportunity, sparking a massive redevelopment of the area by private businesses and the county government. With the renewed economic investment, rent in Clarendon shot up by 400%. For much of Little Saigon, the abrupt economic changes forced them to move. From the once culturally vibrant streets of Clarendon, Arlington's Vietnamese and other refugee populations dispersed, resettling in nearby Fairfax County and Falls Church.

Even as Little Saigon declined, Arlington saw a burst in immigration from other Asian nations. Over the past thirty years, the Asian-American population in the US increased by an estimated 21 million, and although much of this settlement has been concentrated on the west coast, Arlington has remained a beneficiary as well. High-quality education and a growing tech hub enabled Arlington and other Northern Virginia counties to position themselves as hotspots for Asian immigration. Since 2000, the county's Asian-American population has increased from 16,327 to 19,895 people—in total, this number makes up 9.6% of Arlington's population.

Perhaps most unique about Arlington's Asian immigration—especially compared to surrounding counties—is its prolific Mongolian-American population. The county became an enclave for Mongolian settlement more by chance than anything else, with the initial immigrants simply happening to come to Arlington. From there, the population burgeoned, as Mongolian immigrants in search of a community away from home honed in on the county. In 2007, the Mongolian embassy estimated that 2,600 Mongolian-Americans lived in Arlington, making up more than 10% of all Mongolian immigrants in the United States at the time. Today, as the population continues to grow, Mongolian is the fourth-most common native language among students in Arlington Public Schools.

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## 2021-22 AHS Board Elected

On May 13, 2021, AHS held its annual meeting and the new Board of Directors was approved by the membership. Officers were reinstated for another term: President Cathy Bonneville Hix, Vice-President Dr. Gerald Haines, Treasurer John Tuohy, and Secretary Sean Denniston. Board members were elected to remain on the Board: Annette Benbow, Tom Dickinson, Patrick Hope, Tracy Hopkins, Jessica Kaplan, Annette Marrero-Oliveras, Lara McCauley, David Pearson, and W. Karl VanNewkirk and new members Charles Clark and Michael Schaffner were approved. Dr. Mark Benbow continues to be the volunteer director of the AHS museum, making him an *ex-officio* member of the Board.

## Stewardship of Your Money

AHS depends on donations and membership fees to enable us to carry out our mission. Your financial donations have allowed us to continue the following work:

- Repairs to the Arlington Historical Museum in preparation for re-opening in July.
- Repair and maintenance work on the Ball-Sellers House
- Increased purchase of books about Arlington for our online and museum bookstore.
- Management of a zoom account to offer virtual programming.

# Historical Tribute to Arlington Businesses: The Italian Store

*An integral part of Arlington's history are the businesses in our community. Many of them have been part of our community for decades. AHS is launching a series to highlight the great business community of Arlington. This article was written by Alexander Aguilera.*



The Italian Store has been supplying Arlingtonians with signature sandwiches, pizza, and catering services since its opening more than forty years ago in 1980. Inspiration for the store came from Vincent Tramonte, the son of Italian immigrants, who moved to the Washington area from New York in the 1940s. Vincent immediately noticed the lack of authentic Italian restaurants in the area and soon after opened the doors to The Italian Store's original Lyon Village location.

In the store's earliest days Mama Tramonte worked in the kitchen with the two Tramonte sons manning the store. The brothers made fresh mozzarella daily and supplied not only the store's early customers but also the area's restaurants with the fresh cheese. As one of the earliest suppliers of authentic Italian ingredients to the region, The Italian Store maintained strong ties to distributors in both Italy and New York that continue today. This

includes directly imported Italian wine, cheese, and meat.

Opened in 2015, the Westover location welcomes customers with an open espresso counter and gelato bar. This includes espresso cocktails and coffee liqueur. The dining room includes Tramonte family artifacts such as a Tramonte passport and family photos. Both locations feature wine selections from all over Italy. Perhaps the most famous menu items at the store are the sandwiches. This location also boasts floor tiles from Manetti Gusmano & Figli, the Italian company that supplied bricks for the Duomo at Santa Maria del Fiore, the cathedral in Florence, Italy that is reputed to be the birthplace of the Renaissance.

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## Arlington Historical Society Membership

If you received this newsletter by email or USPS, congratulations! Your membership is one of more than nearly 400 AHS memberships as of May 2021. Since our sponsor and dual memberships are two members, AHS has nearly 500 members. Thank you for your support of AHS!

Many annual memberships will expire on June 30, 2021. If your membership is up for renewal, expect to see renewal reminders in late June 2021. Please renew promptly to continue your benefits and save AHS follow-up costs. Memberships that are new or have renewed since March 1, 2021 are already renewed for 2021-2022. Life members are just that, life members, and do not renew annually.

Your membership dues support AHS's mission of preserving, promoting, and interpreting Arlington County's history. All members get the following benefits:

- Subscription to the annual Arlington Historical Magazine
- 10% discount at Arlington Historical Museum shop and our online store
- Subscription to the quarterly newsletter
- Invitations to members-only events
- Priority ticketing and discounts for annual banquet and other ticketed events

Sponsor and Life members also get:

- Free admission/shop discounts at over 1,000 cultural institutions through North American Reciprocal Museum (NARM) Association
- Recognition in Arlington Historical Magazine and annual banquet program

Business/Organization members also get recognition in each issue of the Society's newsletter, Arlington Historical Magazine, and annual banquet program.

### Business Members

We are honored to have the support of the following local businesses and organizations:

Altria Client Services  
Aurora Hills Women's Club  
Dominion Energy  
Fairlington Historical Society  
Glass Distributors  
John Marshall Bank  
Prudential Financial  
Shooshan Company  
Warren G. Stambaugh Foundation

# AHS Kicks Off Major Preservation/Renovation Project

For the past eight months, the Arlington Historical Society has been working with Milner Preservation, part of MFTA Architecture, an Arlington firm, to conduct a feasibility study of our museum located in the 1891 Hume School. Our beloved museum is the oldest standing school in the county and is on the National Register of Historic Sites. AHS is committed to doing the work on this property to make it the first-class museum this great county deserves.



The feasibility study indicated that the museum building was structurally sound. However, extensive preservation work does need to be done to protect the building from further deterioration. Since the school was turned into the museum in the 1960's, there has not been a large-scale preservation effort. Instead, we have been able to use funding we were able to secure to address needs such as a new roof as the issues presented themselves. This “band-aid” approach will no longer allow us to make sure our 4,000+ artifacts are protected.

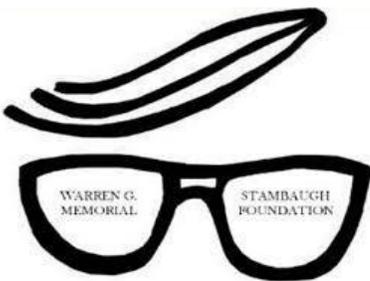
Several preservation needs were addressed by the report. Most notably, there is a need for restoration of the windows throughout the museum. These windows have deteriorated and contain lead-based paint. The deterioration of the windows, combined with an outdated HVAC system will have a damaging effect on our artifact collection over time unless we address these issues. In addition, there are waterproofing strategies that had been previously put in place that need to be updated to protect the museum from ground water leakage.

In addition to preservation, AHS is also focused on renovations that will make this museum a treasure for years to come. Currently, the largest use of space in our museum is for storage due to our ever-growing artifact collection. We will be seeking off-site storage space and then plan to renovate the second floor to provide another large exhibit space and a meeting room. This renovation will include HVAC, electric and plumbing upgrades. We will also be addressing accessibility issues including upgraded bathrooms and an elevator at the rear of the property to make sure all our visitors can access the entire building. To learn more about Hume School and this project go to <https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/2021/05/hume-school-past-present-and-future-2021/>

While this preservation/renovation project seems daunting, we look to the leaders of AHS who came before us. In December of 1959, a proposal came to the newly formed AHS that they acquire the Hume School for a museum. At the time, the school had not been used for several years and was in seriously bad shape. In fact, one member was quoted as saying, “If we owned the property today, it would be ten years before we could get the money to put the building in shape for a museum.” And yet, by September 1963, the museum opened, due to the hard work and support of the members as well as the community. It is with that spirit we begin our journey. We are looking for your support. Arlington needs a first-class museum to share its history and together we can make that happen!

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## AHS Member Susan Prokop and the Stambaugh Story



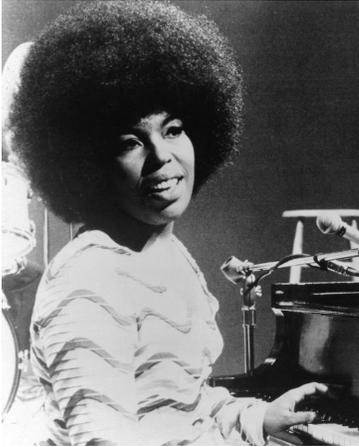
This past fall, AHS partnered with the Warren G. Stambaugh Foundation to hold an event honoring the legacy of Stambaugh and raising money for a feasibility study for the Arlington Historical Museum. One of the stars of that event was not seen on the screen but was the backbone of the entire presentation. Long-time Arlington resident and AHS member, Susan Prokop, created the entire presentation about Warren G. Stambaugh.

Through extensive research, Susan brought Stambaugh to life. Especially impressive was her ability to find photos of Stambaugh in action as digital images were not as ubiquitous in the 1980s as they are today. AHS would like to thank Susan for all her work and apologize for not noting it in the article about the event in the March newsletter. AHS is proud to host the product of Susan's efforts to help us tell the story of the historic role Warren Stambaugh played in Arlington on the AHS website at: <https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org/2021/02/i-remember-warren/>

## Three Sisters: Person, Place and Artifact

*This column showcases three historical things that make Arlington so unique. Our three sisters consist of a person, a place, and an artifact from the AHS collection. This article was written by Zoe Beardsley.*

### Person: Roberta Flack



Roberta Flack was born in Black Mountain, North Carolina in 1937 and moved to Arlington as an infant. As a child, Flack displayed immense musical talent, frequently accompanying the choir of the Lomax African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Arlington by playing the piano. As she grew older, Flack's interest in classical piano grew. She was so talented that she earned a full music scholarship to Howard University at age 15. She eventually changed her major from piano to voice and graduated from Howard at age 19. Flack then began to teach music at various schools in the Washington D.C. area, performing at nightclubs on the side.

Flack's life was changed forever in the late 1960's when Jazz musician Les McCann came to the D.C. nightclub, Mr. Henry's, where Flack frequently performed. After hearing her sing, McCann introduced her to producer Joel Dorn who signed her to Atlantic Records. In 1968 Flack released her debut studio album, "First Take" which took her just 10 hours to record. This album launched Flack into stardom and marked the beginning of Flack's success.

Throughout her career, Flack has recorded hits like "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face," "Where Is the Love," "Killing Me Softly With His Song," and lots more. Many of her songs have been covered by different artists, a testament to the impact she made, and still makes, on the music industry. In her lifetime, Roberta Flack has achieved 18 Billboard-charted songs, four Grammy awards, 13 nominations and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Grammys.

In her later life, Flack founded the Roberta Flack School of Music at the Hyde Leadership Charter School in the Bronx, which enables underprivileged students to get a free music education. Though she retired from touring in 2018, she still continues to make special appearances and remains an influential figure in the music world today at age 84.

### Place: Arlington Post Office

The Arlington Post Office, located at 3118 N. Washington Blvd, was built in 1937 to great acclaim. Over 1,000 people attended the cornerstone-laying ceremony which was preceded by a 40-float parade. The building itself was established to consolidate Postal Services within Arlington, eliminating the need for the multiple post offices in areas like Rosslyn, Glencarlyn and even Georgetown, that had been providing Postal Services to Arlington.



The building location was chosen because of its proximity to the business district, and the prediction that there would be future growth in the area. Inside, the building are murals depicting scenes of Virginia life. The building was named as a Local Historic District in 1984 and was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1986. Today it is still used as a Post Office and stands as an important landmark in Arlington history.

### Artifact: Concert Barrel Organ



This artifact is a tabletop organ from 1923. It is made up of a couple elements. The box itself is made of oak, and features a black wooden handle, as well as trap doors, one containing directions and the other displaying the roller that sits inside the box. The roller is a wooden cylinder with protruding metal spikes. The song title is written on the label. To listen to the song, you would place the roller inside the box in the correct position and then crank the handle. The organ and its music rolls were a gift from Jack and Louisa Burns.



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## **History Awaits Visit Online or in- Person**

**Arlington Historical Museum**  
1805 South Arlington Ridge Road  
Arlington, VA 22202  
Reopens on July 4, 2021

**Ball-Sellers House Museum**  
5620 Third Street South  
Arlington, VA 22204  
Reopened!

**The Arlington Historical Society**, founded in 1956, is a non-profit organization incorporated under Virginia laws. The Society supports research, collection, preservation, discovery, and dissemination of Arlington County's history. Board meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM. and are open to the public.

Website: <https://arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org>  
Email: [info@arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org)  
703-892-4204

