A Few Facts About
Arlington County History

Arlington was carved out of Fairfax County as Virginia's contribution to the 10-mile square district to be established as the seat of government of the United States under Article I, Section 8, Clause 17 of the Constitution.

- **1608**: Arlington's written history begins with the journals of Captain John Smith, who chronicled his exploration of the Potomac River up to the falls at Little Falls, sailing past what is now the Arlington shoreline, one year after the founding of Jamestown.

- **1743**: John Ball obtains a patent on 166 acres of land including a site in what is now the Glencarlyn area of Arlington. John and his wife Elizabeth build a log cabin on the site. The cabin survives as the oldest built structure in Arlington County and part of the Ball-Sellers House.

- **1790–1791**: Congress passes legislation providing for the location of the U.S. seat of government in a federal district straddling the Potomac River near where the Anacostia River flows into it, on land ceded by Maryland and Virginia.

- **1791–1792**: Boundary stones are laid to mark the separation of the federal district from the states of Virginia and Maryland.

- **1801**: Congress moves to the new capital and passes legislation calling the federal district the "District of Columbia," placing it under control of Congress, and organizing it into two counties, Washington County to the north of the river covering the land ceded by Maryland, and Alexandria County to the west and south covering the land ceded by Virginia.

- **1814**: During the British burning and occupation of Washington, the Declaration of Independence and other historic documents are temporarily hidden in the Pinmut Run grist mill near Chain Bridge.

- **1831**: Robert E. Lee and Mary Randolph Custis marry in the Custis family mansion, Arlington House.

- **1847**: Alexandria County, which included present-day Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, is retroceded from the District of Columbia to Virginia.

- **1861**: Federal troops occupy Alexandria County the day after Virginia secedes from the Union. A ring of forts is built to protect Washington and the three bridges into the city from Virginia, Aqueduct Bridge, Chain Bridge, and Long Bridge (now 14th Street bridge).

- **1863**: A Freedman's Village is established for freed slaves on the grounds of the Arlington Estate.

- **1864**: Arlington National Cemetery is established on the grounds of the Arlington Estate.

- **1908**: Orville Wright pilots a demonstration flight at Ft. Myer and crashes; his passenger, Lt. Thomas Selfridge, becomes the first person to die in an airplane crash.

- **1915**: The first transatlantic voice communication is completed between Arlington Radio Towers and the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

- **1920**: Alexandria County is renamed Arlington County, primarily to avoid confusion with the City of Alexandria.


- **1943**: Construction is completed on the Pentagon.

- **1954**: President Dwight Eisenhower dedicates the United States Marine Corps War ("Iwo Jima") Memorial.

- **1962**: Arlington resident John Glenn becomes the first American to orbit the earth aboard Friendship 7.

- **2001**: Al Qaeda terrorists crash American Airlines Flight 77 into the Pentagon on September 11, causing 184 fatalities.

What the Arlington Historical Society Does

AHS is a private, § 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 1956 to help preserve, promote and interpret Arlington County's history. AHS is active in the following program areas, among others:

- Operating the Arlington Historical Museum in the historic Hume School building on South Arlington Ridge Road
- Operating the Ball-Sellers House in Glencarlyn as an historic house museum that includes the mid-18th century John Ball cabin
- Publishing the Arlington Historical Magazine, an annual scholarly journal, maintaining a website, Facebook page, Twitter account, and other social media platforms promoting Arlington history
- Sponsoring regular lectures and panel discussions, and occasional tours and hikes, on Arlington County history
- Educating the public about historic preservation in Arlington
- Working with Arlington schools and community organizations to promote local history
- Publishing a quarterly newsletter
- Co-sponsoring an annual essay contest for middle and high school students on Arlington County history
- Conferring awards for significant contributions to Arlington County history at an annual banquet

www.ArlingtonHistoricalSociety.org
www.facebook.com/ArlingtonHistoricalSociety

Help tell Arlington's stories by becoming a member today!
History Comes Alive at the Society’s Two Museums

The Arlington Historical Museum in the historic Hurme School (1891) features permanent and rotating exhibits on Arlington’s history from the earliest to more recent times. The collection includes Indian and Civil War artifacts, transit maps of 1920s trolley lines, a black history exhibit, and an exhibit on the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the Pentagon.

The museum is open on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at 1805 S. Arlington Ridge Road, Arlington, Virginia 22202 (phone: 703-892-4204). Admission is free.

The Ball-Sellers House offers a glimpse of how early Virginians lived in colonial Arlington. Around 1743, yeoman farmer John Ball and his wife, Elizabeth, built a one-room log cabin for their family. The cabin survives as part of the Ball-Sellers House. It is the oldest surviving structure in Arlington. The cabin is "the best example of an intact 18th century pioneer settlement log cabin remaining in the eastern half of the United States," according to nationally recognized log cabin expert Douglass Reed.

The Ball-Sellers House is open on Saturdays from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. from April through October, and for group tours by appointment (call 703-942-9217), at 5620 S. Third Street, Arlington, Virginia 22204. Admission is free.

Benefits of AHS Membership

Becoming a member of the Arlington Historical Society supports its mission of preserving, promoting and interpreting Arlington County’s history.

All members get the following benefits:
- Subscription to annual Arlington Historical Magazine
- 10% discount at Arlington Historical Museum shop
- Subscription to periodic newsletter
- Invitations to member-only events
- Priority ticketing and discounts for annual banquet and other ticketed events

Sponsor and Life members also get:
- Free admission and shop discounts at over 1000 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.

Join the Arlington Historical Society:

- Online with a credit card or PayPal account at www.ArlingtonHistoricalSociety.org; or
- By completing the form below and sending it to Arlington Historical Society, P.O. Box 100402, Arlington, VA 22210-3402, along with your check payable to the Arlington Historical Society.

I/we would like to join the Arlington Historical Society at the following membership level:
- □ Life ($1,000)
- □ Sponsor ($100 annually)
- □ Dual ($50 annually)
- □ Individual ($35 annually)
- □ Business/Organization ($350 annually)

Name (or two names for Sponsor or Dual membership)

Street Address

City, State, Postal Code

Best email address

Best phone number

Please check any applicable box:
- □ Contact me/us about volunteering for AHS (examples: museum docent, writer, exhibit or event organizer).
- □ Email the AHS newsletter and other member communications (which may contain official notices) to me/us instead of sending them by postal mail.

www.ArlingtonHistoricalSociety.org
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