



Arlington Historical Society Newsletter

www.ArlingtonHistoricalSociety.org

Volume 50, Number 3

Jan.–Feb. 2006

AHS Membership Meeting and Program

Thursday, January 12, 2006, 7:30 P.M.

“The 1814 British Invasion of Washington
from Alexandria (now Arlington) County’s Perspective”

Speaker: Carole Herrick, Author of
August 24, 1814: Washington in Flames (2005)

Arlington Central Library Auditorium

1015 N. Quincy Street

Parking Available

Program Co-Sponsored by Virginia Room
of Arlington Central Library

Message From the President

At this time of year, many people take time to think about the events of the past year and to look forward to those of the next.

Devotees of Arlington history had a busy year in 2005. For the first time, a local paper listed "historic preservation" as one of Arlington's top issues. No doubt this is related to what's happening in the residential real estate market and citizens' desires to preserve their neighborhoods from McMansionization. But we think it also relates to a renewed interest among Arlingtonians for the sense of place and sense of community that can result from historic preservation, if it's well done. Also in 2005, we saw **Kevin Vincent**, the new Chairman of the Arlington County Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB), refocus the HALRB on historical affairs policy issues, such as the need for a county archeology program, an Arlington Heritage Center, and a good historic marker program. Many in Arlington's historical affairs community had been fearful that the HALRB's recent focus on urban design issues was causing it to neglect its responsibilities in the historical affairs area.

As we look forward to 2006, we in the leadership of the Historical Society hope to build upon our past successes and Arlington's renewed interest in history and historic preservation. We want to increase our membership. We want to mark the Society's 50th anniversary.

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Arlington Historical Society 2005-2006 Officers and Directors

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First Vice President, Eric Stewart
Treasurer, Kevin Appel
Corresponding Secretary, Carolyn Boswell
Immediate Past President, Jim Murphy

Board Members

Charlene Bickford
Richard J. Herbst
Cynthia D. Kunz
Ann C. Rudd
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Committee Chairpersons

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(703) 941-4086, tikal2@juno.com

Hume School Building, Karl VanNewkirk,
(703) 536-5916, karlvannewkirk@comcast.net

Hume School Grounds, Richard J. Herbst,
(703) 892-5290, herbstgdad@aol.com

Museum, [Vacant; contact Teresa Rose,
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teresarose@att.com]

Programs, [Vacant]

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(703) 533-0000, sid@simmondsandklima.com

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.

Society meetings: second Thursdays, 7:30 p.m., in September, November, January, March, and May, unless otherwise announced. Open to the public, short business meetings are followed by presentations on various aspects of history. Arlington Reunion programs: third Thursdays, 10 a.m. - 12 noon, in October and April. Arlington Historical Museum, 1805 S. Arlington Ridge Road, open Saturdays and Sundays, 1 - 4 p.m. (closed February). (703) 892-4204.

Reader response and small business advertising are welcome. Please direct correspondence to: Editor, AHS Newsletter, P.O. Box 100402, Arlington, VA 22210. Website: www.ArlingtonHistoricalSociety.org

Bell Ringer Campaign Now in Progress

Please don't forget the Arlington Historical Society in your end-of-year charitable contributions. The Society's annual end-of-year fundraising program, the Bell Ringer Campaign, is now in progress. All members of the Society should have received a fundraising letter in early December. If you've misplaced the letter, you can just send a check in your own envelope to Arlington Historical Society, P.O. Box 100402, Arlington, VA 22210-3402. Please write "Bell Ringer Campaign" on the check and/or envelope to assist our bookkeeper! Thanks.

Auriel Bessemer: The Murals and the Artist

Virginia Mecklenburg, Senior Curator of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, addressed AHS members November 15 on "Post Office Murals of the 1930s and the Arlington Central Post Office's Historic Auriel Bessemer Murals."

The murals, now on display in the Arlington Central Library, were painted by **Auriel Bessemer** as part of the Section of Fine Art enterprise, whose purpose was to beautify Federal buildings with paintings and sculpture. Over roughly a decade, more than one thousand murals were created for post offices and courthouses, common citizens' meeting grounds.

In 1938, young Auriel Bessemer was invited to paint murals for Arlington's Main Post Office in Clarendon. This was probably Arlington's first display of public art.

AHS members learned more about this artist from a nephew, **Fred Stollnitz**, who lives in Silver Spring but works in Ballston. Mr. Stollnitz had heard about the library's upcoming program and offered to share with the

audience his recollections of his artist uncle and some family background.

Auriel Bessemer was the son of Hungarian immigrants. His father, trained as a lawyer and caretaker of a large wheat-growing estate in Hungary, eventually settled his family at a religious community in Florida and devoted himself to helping fellow Hungarian Jews. Auriel Bessemer's mother later operated a dry goods store and a deli. Stollnitz' mother, Helen Bessemer Stollnitz, was a sister of Auriel Bessemer; she moved to this area, attended Central High School in Washington, and became a printer's aide.

Mr. Stollnitz recalled an uncle who would visit during the holidays, bearing gifts of his art work—pastels, sketches, and pencil drawings of heroically proportioned human figures with a spiritual, even a mystical theme.

The seven murals currently on exhibit at the Arlington Central Library are:

- Apple Harvest
- Captain John Smith Meeting the Massawomeck Indians
- Tobacco Picking in the Late Colonial Era
- Robert E. Lee Accepting the Command of the Armies of Virginia
- Arlington Polo Players
- An Old-Fashioned Picnic at Great Falls
- Early Indian Life on Analostan Island

The murals will remain in the Arlington Public Central Library until fall 2006, when they again will be displayed in the renamed and newly reopened Joseph L. Fisher Post Office.

Cosponsors of the November 15 program included the Virginia Room of the Arlington County Public Library, the United States Postal Service, and the Arlington Heritage Alliance, the latter of which furnished refreshments.

Arlington Reunion: Remembering Local Restaurants

Arlingtonians gathered November 3 at the Central Library Auditorium to reminisce about Arlington gathering spots for food and drink.

Conchita Mitchell, current chair of the Board of Zoning Appeals and a resident of Arlington Heights, served as moderator.

Representatives from two of Arlington's family-owned restaurants spoke at the meeting. **Stella Veitch** described the Lamplighter, a restaurant that she operated with her sister and brother-in-law. It stood on land where the FDIC building now stands, and it served Arlington from 1961 until 1987. Mrs. Veitch described its atmosphere as that of a village pub, where people would come in and make friends.

Grace Abi-Najm Shea of the Lebanese Taverna described her family's restaurant, now celebrating 26 years in Arlington. It began

as a pizza and sub shop named the Athena Taverna and soon brought Middle Eastern specialties to Arlington. It now has three locations in the County, as well as five elsewhere. Grace grew up in the family business; she still enjoys working at the Washington Boulevard/McKinley Street location because it gives her a chance to maintain her ties with regular patrons she has come to know over the years.

Reunion participants fondly recalled many other restaurants, including Bob and Edith's Diner, the Hot Shoppe, Dun-Movin, the Company Inkwell, Allison's Little Tea House, Hogate's, Tom Sarris' Orleans House, Whitey's, and Mario's Pizza. Afterward, they enjoyed refreshments provided by the Lebanese Taverna, Tara Thai, Whole Foods, Giant, and Friends of the Arlington Library. Arlington Reunion is cosponsored by the Arlington Historical Society and the Virginia Room of the Arlington Central Library.

Free License Plates for Jamestown's 400th

Did you know that you can get free Virginia license plates commemorating the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown in 2007? When renewing your license plates, just specify that you want the Jamestown 400th anniversary plates. They will be sent to you without charge. A good way to celebrate our history and update your plates without much effort or expense!

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sary in 2006 as both a celebration of past successes and an opportunity to do more for our community.

This time of year brings the winter solstice and the religious holidays that accompany it. Many history buffs find this a favorite time of year, perhaps because of the many traditions that surround these holidays. We hope your holiday season this year gives you a chance to enjoy history and traditions and a season to remember with fondness.

— Gerry Laporte

Stay Active This Winter: Movie, Spy Program, Walking Tour

Plan now for winter programs sponsored by the Conservation & Interpretation Section of Arlington County's Parks Department. To register for events listed below, call the Registration Office at (703) 228-4747, TTY (703) 228-4743, or visit the Lubber Run Recreation Center at 300 N. Park Drive, 2nd floor, Monday—Friday from 8:30 A.M. to 5 P.M. On-line registration is available at <https://registration.co.arlington.va.us>

Pola Negri Movie Night (#624472A), Thursday, January 12, 7—9 P.M.

Adults are invited to the Gulf Branch Nature Center (GBNC) to learn about a queen of the silent screen—**Pola Negri**—who lived in the Nature Center when it was still a private home. Learn about the star's life and then enjoy a large-screen viewing of the 1927 silent classic, "Barbed Wire." Popcorn and soft drinks will be served. Fee is \$5 per person, and reservations are required. Meet at the GBNC, 3608 N. Military Road.

Hanssen Spy Tour (#624405A), Saturday, February 18, 3:30—4:30 P.M. Adults and teens age 16 and up are welcome to this program that takes place on the anniversary date of the capture of spy Robert Hanssen. Learn about his connections with the Long Branch Nature Center (LBNC), the FBI's nature center operations, and the cold, hard cash that was stashed here. Fee is \$2 per person, and reservations are required. Meet at the LBNC, 625 S. Carlin Springs Road.

A Fort Smith Park & Historic Site Walking Tour (#622643E) on Wednesday,

February 22, 2:30—3:30 P.M., is open to children ages eight and above and to adults. Learn about the park's Civil War history and explore its diverse wildlife habits. Dress for the weather. Program is free, but reservations are required.

Fort C.F. Smith Park & Historic Site will host the **Civil War Discovery Series** for children ages seven through eleven. Reservations are required, and the fee is \$3 per session. Topics for the Wednesday afternoon sessions, held from 3:30 to 4:30 at Fort C.F. Smith, 2411 N. 24th Street, are as follows:

Animal Mascots (#622620A), December 14.
Learn about animals beloved by the troops.

Civil War Spies (#622621A), January 25.
Learn about famous spies and the secret codes they used.

Medals of Honor (#622622A), February 22.
Learn about children who earned medals during the War.

Artillery: It's All About Firepower (#622623A), March 22. Learn to work as a team to aim, load, and fire. Have fun during a mock battle using tennis ball machines.

TIMOTHY A. REESE

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Farm Journals Tell of Arlington Life

Sara Collins recently researched farm journals in the Virginia Room, Fairfax Regional Library, that include information about Arlington. She hopes that someone with energy, research skills, and interest might pursue this story for a book or an article in *The Arlington Historical Magazine*. The address of the Virginia Room in Fairfax Regional Library is 3915 Chain Bridge Road, Fairfax VA 22030.

Information is listed under:

- Benjamin L. Otterback Papers, 1854-1891
- Book 1: Stock Book, May 1, 1854-January 18, 1856 and Farm Journal, February 1, 1870-December 28, 1877
- Book 2: Farm Journal, January 1, 1878-December 28, 1886
- Book 3: Farm Journal, January 1, 1887-April 30, 1891. "B.L. Otterback, Glendale, Alexandria County."

The material is designated MICR. 975.529 O.

Sara writes:

The first two books document the farm in Fairfax County, some of which later became Fort Belvoir. Journal #3 is titled "B.L. Otterback, Glendale, Alexandria County." And

while I lacked time for a detailed study of this journal, it appears to have less of the detail of daily chores on a farm and more of an account of social life. From the names of visitors to the Glendale farm or property, e.g., Hume, Goings, Smith, Campbell, Yates, Hayes, etc., I thought perhaps that Glendale may have been in the southern part of the county which was later annexed by the city of Alexandria, now the Del Ray area. There is a street in that area called Glendale. So far, I have been unable to find the property or census records for Glendale and the Otterback family. It appears that the family left their extensive farm holdings in Fairfax (some 19,000 acres) and perhaps retired to our area. They owned property in Washington also.

The Otterback name appears in some county records. A **Phillip Otterback** owned a few hundred acres on Four Mile Run near Ball's Tavern in the 1830s. He appears in D.C. newspapers of that period as a stockholder of steamboat and in ads for runaway slaves, etc. And an Arthur Otterbach is listed as a laborer living in Barcroft in the Alexandria County Directory of 1912. Relationships for these people with the same last name have not been established.

Send Your News Items to Us!

As your editor, I always welcome items for the newsletter. My deadline for receiving copy is the 10th of the month before the next month's newsletter. For example, I need copy for the March/April 2006 newsletter by February 10th. You may e-mail me at Verdaelizabeth@att.net,

send material by mail to 2140 North Military Road, Arlington VA 22207, or telephone me at (703) 524-3888. I will contact you to confirm that I have received your news. If you do not hear from me within three days, please telephone and leave a message. I am looking forward to hearing from you!

--Betsy Moyer

AHS Welcomes Docents and Other Volunteers!

If you would like to be a docent at the Arlington Historical Museum, please call **Teresa Rose**, AHM Docent Coordinator, at (703) 271-0489 or e-mail her at teresarose@att.com. The museum is located in the former Hume School, 1805 South Arlington Ridge Road. Members wanting to volunteer for the many other volunteer activities available through the Arlington Historical Society, including being a docent at the Society's other historic property, the Ball-Sellers House, 5620 South Third Street, should contact **Ann Rudd**, Volunteer Coordinator, at acrudd@juno.com or (703) 536-8270.

2006 Plan: Join AHS' E-Mail List

Learn about upcoming AHS meetings and events on the AHS e-mail announcement list. To subscribe, visit www.arlingtonhistorical-society.org and follow the instructions. Your name and e-mail address will NOT be used for anything but AHS-related messages; there are usually one or two messages a month.

Best Wishes

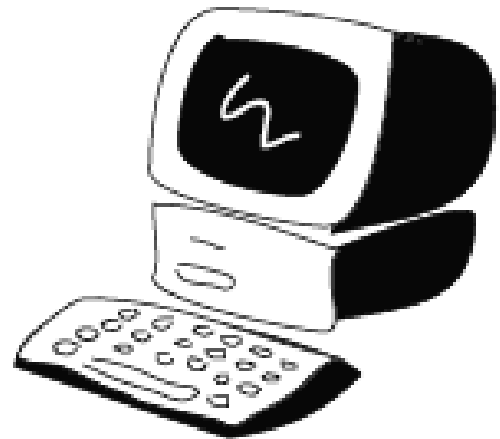
AHS wishes **Joan White**, President of the Black Heritage Museum of Arlington, a speedy recovery after her recent illness.

AUSTIN MORRILL
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Museum Hours

Saturdays and Sundays, 1–4 P.M.,
but please call ahead first.



See You in Cyberspace?!

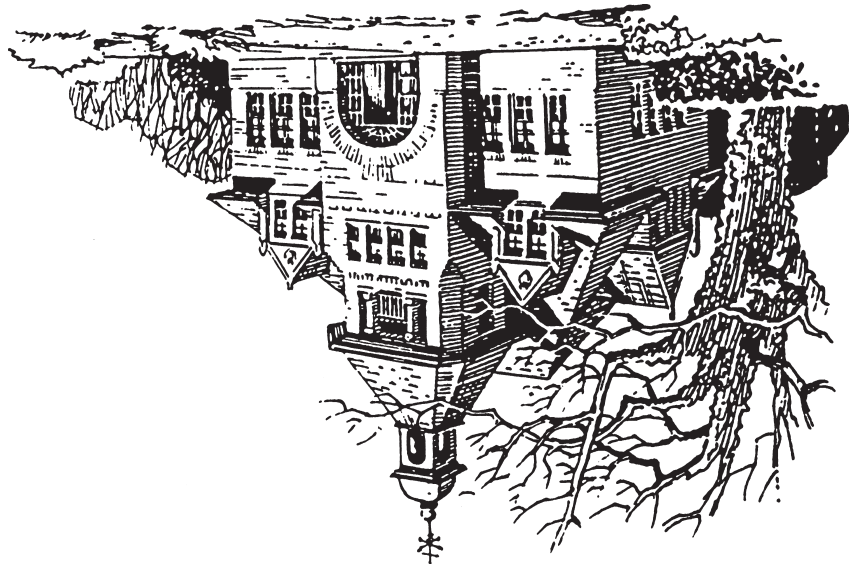
Check out the AHS Website to learn more about life in our home town!

Visit any time!

WWW.ARLINGTONHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG

Arlington Historical Society
P.O. Box 100402
Arlington, VA 22210

TIME SENSITIVE!!



AHS CALENDAR

Thursday, January 12, 2006, 7:30 P.M. AHS
Membership Meeting and Program. Speaker:
Carole Herrick, Author of *August 24, 1814:
Washington in Flames*. Arlington Central Library
Auditorium, 1015 N. Quincy Street. Program
co-sponsored by Virginia Room of Arlington
Central Library. Parking Available. FREE!

Encourage a Friend to Join AHS!
Yes—Please register me as a member of the
Arlington Historical Society!

Name(s) _____
Address _____
Phone _____
Total Amount _____

- Regular \$25/year
- Additional Family Member \$5/year
- Junior (under 18) \$2/year
- Sponsor \$50/year
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Note: memberships of \$25 or more include a
subscription to *The Arlington Historical Magazine*.
I am interested in helping in the following areas or
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