

Fall 2009

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**Annual
Dues and
Volunteer Form
Enclosed**

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**Arlington Historical
Society**
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Arlington, VA 22210
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JOINT TOUR OF THE HISTORIC FORT MYER COMMISSARY SERGEANT'S QUARTERS

TOM DICKINSON, VICE-PRESIDENT

A very lucky date change from Thursday to Wednesday evening saved the tour of the Meigs-designed house on Fort Myer from being washed out by rain. Wednesday, July 22 was a clear, mild evening with unusually low humidity and balmy breezes for a DC area summer, almost ideal conditions for an outside tour. The tour was jointly sponsored by the Society and the Arlington Heritage Alliance. Approximately seventy people attended the tour, which was lead and narrated by Mr. Kim Holien, Ft. Myer Historian.

The tour became a reality after an informational conversation between me and Kim Holien in 2008 at a tour of the Arlington Lustron. Because of the hard work of Ms. Leah Rubalcaba of the Fort Myer Community Relations office over the past months, we were able to make the Meigs house tour a reality. The Society is honored that , COL Laura Richardson, 100th Garrison Commander of the Fort Myer Military Community, was on hand to provide a warm welcome and historical context to the tour, citing the Wright Brothers flights at Ft. Myer a hundred years ago as an example of Ft. Myer's unique historic past.

The Montgomery Meigs-designed modular home is the only one of its type still in existence. Access to the house is rare because it is located in a secure area on the base. This particular structure was completed in 1877. It is the last one surviving, of hundreds, perhaps thousands, manufactured and constructed at military locations throughout the US. The original idea behind the house was to address a need for more permanent, sturdy, reliable, and inexpensive housing for non-commissioned officers at remote US Army forts and locations across the U.S. following the Civil War.

Union General Montgomery C. Meigs, Quartermaster General of the U.S. Army, designed this house as part of his personal dedication to develop economical, well-designed buildings for the Army. Formally known as the Commissary Sergeant's Quarters, the building reflects General Meigs commitment to provide suitable, permanent housing for all ranks in the Army. According to a US Army publication on the building "the design for the Commissary Sergeant's Quarters is based on an early standardized plan developed in



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response to widespread public outcry at the poor living conditions of the military, especially for enlisted men and noncommissioned officers."

The unique interlocking horizontal plank construction could be easily assembled with a minimum of labor. According to Mr. Holien, eight soldiers could assemble or disassemble the two room house in a day. All pieces were typically cut at a mill nearby, and then shipped on a single railroad flatcar to a destination. All doors and windows were pre-assembled, and then simply nailed into existing wall openings. Mass production of all component parts kept costs very low, and allowed for standardization and interchangeability of all component pieces.

All attendees were allowed to tour the house, which is now used by the Army Officers Wives Club of the Greater Washington Area as an office and supply storage facility. The interior is quite plain and simple; it would have been a challenge for a family with children to have lived full-time in this house, as many did at military installations all over the US.

Mr. Holien spoke about the restoration of the house which took place in 1992. The original building had been added to and highly modified. The restoration reduced the structure to its original size, form, and appearance. Prior to restoration, research was conducted to document the original use and appearance. A permanent record for the Historic American Building Survey was undertaken. This document is now on file at the Library of Congress. This documentation provides valuable insights into the home life of non-commissioned officers in the third quarter of the 19th century and the importance to the Army of adequate housing in the peacetime following the Civil War.

**HELP WANTED -
THE SOCIETY IS LOOKING FOR
BANQUET COMMITTEE AND
PROGRAM COMMITTEE VOLUNTEERS
CONTACT**

**INFO@ARLINGTONHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG
IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING.**

JOHN BROWN AND ROBERT E. LEE: ABOLITIONISM AND THE COMING OF THE CIVIL WAR

Arlington House will be open for a special evening program on Saturday, October 10th, 2009 from 7:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m. to commemorate John Brown's Raid. Fergus Bordewich, author of *Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America* will speak on John Brown. A series of talks, tours and exhibits will explore radical abolitionism and its influence on the politics and culture of the country. Other activities will include performances by The Victorian Dance Ensemble and opportunities to learn 19th century dance steps. Special activities for children will be offered. Reservations are free. Please call 703- 235-1530.

This is a rare opportunity for the public to tour the house at night and view the Washington, D.C. evening skyline from the finest vantage point in the area. Arlington House is located in Arlington National Cemetery. Entry times are available at 7:00 p.m., 7:30 p.m., 8:00 p.m., 8:30 p.m., and 9:00 p.m. Lectures by Fergus Bordewich will be conducted at 8:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. This program is part of a series of events that will be hosted by the National Park Service to mark the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War. Parking at Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial is available only with a reservation. Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial is a unit of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. Additional information is available at www.nps.gov/arho or 703-235-1530.

AURORA HILLS ANNUAL BOUTIQUE

On Saturday, December 5 from 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. at the Mount Vernon Baptist Church located at 935 South 23rd Street, the Aurora Hills Women's Club will once again raise funds for the restoration of the Arlington Historical Museum through the 4th Annual Holiday Boutique. In the past three years, the Boutique has raised \$11,000 for the museum's Building Fund. Support the Boutique and support the museum! Shop for one-of-a-kind quality artisan-made gifts for everyone on your holiday gift list. And, don't miss the amazing bake sale.

BALANCE SHEET AS OF JUNE 30, 2009

Historical Society

ASSETS

AHS Operating Account	\$ 12,976.13
John Marshall Bank Fund N.	\$ 39,882.87
John Marshall Bank Fund N	\$ 5,000.99
Vanguard Money Market F	\$ 24,248.55
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 82,108.54

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Opening Bal Equity	\$ 51,960.60
Retained Earnings	\$ 64,097.49
Net Income	\$ (33,949.55)
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	\$ 82,108.54

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES RESTRUCTURED

At its monthly meeting on August 18, 2009, The Society's Board of Directors amended the organization's by-laws to restructure and simplify membership categories and adjust dues. The former "Regular" membership was replaced with an "Individual" membership category at the same \$25.00 annual dues rate. A new "Family Membership" category with annual dues of \$35.00 replaces the surcharges of \$5.00 for additional adult members and \$2.00 for junior members at the same address. Dues for "Sponsor" members were raised from \$50 to \$75. Dues for "Donor" members were raised from \$100.00 to \$125, and a new "Corporate/ Nonprofit" membership category was established at the same \$125.00 per year dues level. The fee for a "Life" membership was raised to \$500 from \$400. The \$40 annual dues for members in a foreign country was replaced with a grant of discretion to the Society's Treasurer to assess a \$10 annual fee on Individual and Family Members in foreign countries.

Dues were last adjusted for "Regular" members in 1999, when they were raised from \$20.00 to \$25.00. The other dues levels were not adjusted at that time, even though they had been the same for many years. The Society plans to publish the names of Sponsor, Donor, Corporate/Nonprofit, and Life Members regularly, unless they request anonymity.



Ball-Sellers House

ASSETS

Checking/Savings	
Ball-Sellers House Fund	\$ 4,808.80
Ball-Sellers Money Market	\$ 9,196.21
John Marshall Bank No. 2	\$ 6,645.13
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 20,650.14

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Opening Bal Equity	\$ 17,659.69
Retained Earnings	\$ 10,142.17
Net Income	\$ (7,151.72)
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	\$ 20,650.14

Income Statement

July 2008 - June 2009

Income

Donations/Tenant	\$ 6,673.01
Interest Dividend	\$ 149.41
Total Income	\$ 6,822.42

Expense

Gifts Given	\$ 250.00
Insurance	\$ 2,189.22
Investment Market Lo.	\$ 2,660.04
Investment Service F.	\$ 100.00
Maintenance	
Indoor	\$ 1,439.24
Outdoor	\$ 1,796.00
Maintenance - Other	\$ 4,893.52
Total Maintenance	\$ 8,128.76

Utilities

Gas & Electric	\$ 451.63
Telephone	\$ 27.90
Water	\$ 166.59
Total Utilities	\$ 646.12

Total Expense \$ 13,974.14

Net Income \$ (7,151.72)

Book Reviews

By Willard Webb

Remarkable Trees of Virginia by Nancy Ross Hugo and Jeff Kirwan with photography by Robert Llewellyn

This spectacular picture book grew out of the "Remarkable Trees of Virginia Project." The authors admit that choosing trees was like selecting students for an Ivy League college - "there are too many qualified applicants for the number of available spaces." From more than 1,000 nominations, they picked only 100 trees. They wanted to include as many "important" native species as possible as well as a wide geographic distribution. Arlington is represented with a little-known native species, a Yellowwood. It stands in Arlington Cemetery in Section 23 just north of the Spanish American War memorial. Another interesting tree is a Great White Ash at Mount Vernon, originally thought to have been planted by George Washington, but now believed to have germinated c. 1819. Other nearby trees include a great Chestnut Oak in Centreville, an ancient Beech in Falls Church, and an American Holly in Alexandria. Anyone who loves trees will savor this volume and its beautiful photos.

Conserving the Commonwealth: The Early Years of the Environmental Movement in Virginia by Margaret T. Peters

Margaret Peters traces the development of the Virginia environmental movement and its efforts to preserve open land, waterways, and historic sites and to create new parks. The first step was, perhaps, the creation of the Shenandoah National Park in 1935. The initial state action came with the establishment of the Virginia Outdoor Recreation Study Commission in 1965. The Commission's publication *Virginia's Common Wealth* inspired the environmental movement for the remainder of the 20th Century. Paralleling the work of the Outdoor Study Commission were the efforts of the private organizations, including the Nature Conservancy, the Piedmont Environmental Council, the

Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and the APVA. Anyone concerned about environmental and conservation issues in Virginia will want to read this book.

Prodigy Houses of Virginia, Architecture and the Native Elite by Barbara Burlison Mooney

Can there be yet another book on Virginia houses? The answer is yes, but this is not the usual coffee table picture volume. Barbara Mooney heeds Thomas Jefferson's advice to look at architecture critically, believing that architecture revealed the character and judgment of its maker and owner. She is more concerned with the social and cultural context in which the Virginia gentry built their imposing houses than in design and construction. She examines twenty-five 18th Century Virginia mansions. Included are many of the familiar ones - Berkeley, Carter's Grove, Gunston Hall, Monticello, Mount Vernon, and Stratford Hall - as well as a number of less well-known houses and some that no longer survive, including among others, Blandfield, Brooke's Bank, Chantilly, Cleve, Corotoman, Germanna, King's Mill, and Mannsfield.

Who Is Markie? The Life of Martha Custis Williams Carter, Cousin and Confidante of Robert E. Lee by Frances Scott and Anne Webb

Two Arlington authors have written this engaging biography of a part-time 19th Century Arlington resident. Martha Custis Williams belonged to the Virginia aristocracy. A great, great granddaughter of Martha Washington, she was a member of the Peter family of Georgetown and a cousin of the Lees of Arlington House. She was the family spinster who cared for all her relatives. She spent much time at Arlington House looking after the elderly George Washington Parke Custis while Mary Lee and her husband Robert were stationed away from Washington. Markie's diaries give an intimate look at the people and life at Arlington House during the 1850s. At age 50, Markie married an old beau, Samuel Powhatan Carter, the only man to serve as both a general and an admiral in the United States Army and Navy, and then played a prominent role in Washington society in the years following the Civil War. This book is a must for anyone interested in the Lee family and the history of Arlington House.



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Come visit our permanent exhibits on
the 200+ year history of the county.



BALL SELLERS HOUSE

5620 South Third Street
Open Saturdays, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
April through October with special
events scheduled during this time.
There is no admission fee, but a
donation is appreciated.
Also arrange a visit by
calling 703-379-2123.

"MEMORIES OF WASHINGTON-LEE HIGH SCHOOL THROUGH THE DECADES"

Thursday, November 12, 2009, 7 PM - 9 PM

Hear about the history of Washington-Lee High School at this informal reunion for alumni of all ages. This event is co-sponsored by Arlington Historical Society, the W-L Alumni Association, and the Arlington Heritage Alliance. It will take place in the 1st floor commons area at Washington-Lee located at 1301 North Stafford Street in Arlington. For more information call 703-228-5955.