

The Old Town Crier

The Monthly Newsletter of the Old Town Civic Association, Inc.

Announcing the February Program and Notice of the Meeting

DATE: Wednesday, February 13, 2008
TIME: 7:00 p.m., Socializing with Neighbors; 7:30 p.m., Program
LOCATION: The Lyceum, 201 South Washington Street

PROGRAM AGENDA:

- (1) **POLICE REPORT: LT. JAMIE BARTLETT**
- (2) **FREEDMEN'S CONTRABAND CEMETERY: PAM CRESSEY, OHA**
- (3) **NATIONAL HARBOR UPDATE: CITY STAFF**

FREEDMEN'S CONTRABAND CEMETERY

The City of Alexandria invites design submissions from architects, landscape architects, artists, students, and the general public to memorialize and honor the 1,800 individuals—who escaped slavery by fleeing to Alexandria during the Civil War—that are buried in Contrabands and Freedmen's Cemetery. The three-acre site is located at the southwest corner of Church and South Washington Streets in Alexandria. Design Competition guidelines will be released on Wednesday, February 6 and the submissions are due Friday, April 25.

Information and criteria for the design will be available starting February 6 at alexandriava.gov/freedmens. Design requirements include interpreting the cemetery site with respect to those who are buried there and providing a focal point consisting of an artistic or interpretive element that respects the integrity of the graves, historic design of the site, and the scale of the adjacent neighborhood.

The deadline for submission of design applications is 5 p.m. on Friday, April 25, 2008. Submissions must be mailed to Lee Center, Attention: Design Competition, 1108 Jefferson St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Entries must be submitted on one entry board, mounted on 30"x 42" foam or illustration board. Each entry board must be oriented vertically, and must include a site plan, a 250-word vision statement, additional images of the proposed design, and a completed entry form.

Each submission will be evaluated based on conformance with the overall mission statement and design criteria outlined in the guidelines. The finalists' designs will be displayed for public comment. Cash prizes will be awarded for winning designs, including \$10,000 for first place; \$5,000 for second place; and \$2,500 for third place. Winners will be notified by July 2008. The winning concept design will be developed into a detailed site design with a \$1.5 to \$2 million construction budget.

Acquisition of the cemetery site was made possible with funding from the Federal Highway Administration and the Virginia Department of Transportation through the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Project. Additional support for historical research and writing and for the design competition came from a Save America's Treasures grant from the National Park Service.

For more information or to download the competition guidelines, visit alexandriava.gov/freedmens. Pam Cressey of the City's Office of Historical Alexandria will brief the OTCA membership concerning the latest happenings regarding Freedmen's Cemetery.

NATIONAL HARBOR UPDATE

The official opening of National Harbor is April 1.

The official opening of Gaylord is April 28.

The first convention (Saturn Dealers) is scheduled for March 28 so we can expect people to come to Alexandria. There will be a few of the restaurants open at National Harbor but not all of course and they will be looking for things to do (a good thing!)

As reported in the Washington Business Journal, the [Army](#) Aviation Association of America will bring an estimated 7,000 people to Gaylord April 6-9, for its annual conference. On the event's peak night it will use 3,000 hotel rooms, surpassing Gaylord's 2,000 rooms. The overflow will go to the Hampton Inn and Suites and Westin National Harbor.

The City Staff will brief the OTCA membership regarding what Alexandria has done to get ready for the opening of National Harbor.

A VANISHING BREED

Horses and, by association, stables were a very important part of Alexandria life for more than a century. Quoting from Out Back, Michael Miller's article on Alexandria's outbuildings;

“Up and down King Street, horses pulled stages with passengers bouncing to and fro, hauled wagons brimming with wheat and grain to the waterfront and rotted along with dapper gentlemen astride on their way to visit their sweethearts. To house these animals, public and private stables were constructed throughout in the city. Unfortunately, many of these structures which played a seminal role in the day-to-day functioning of Alexandria households have been razed.”

Only a handful of stables (also referred to as carriage houses in this article) remain in Old Town today and are visible from a public right-of-way. They are:

? 307 S. Lee (w/ new doorway to accommodate modern garage door)

? 521 S. Fairfax

? 601 Duke

? 613 Wolfe (w/ retrofitted exterior two story staircase)

? 107 S. Lee @ Swift Alley (north façade compromised by many changes)

? 207 Franklin

? 2 Brockets Alley (south façade compromised by many changes)

? 517 S. Washington (covered walkway connecting it to house)

? 214A N. Pitt (located directly behind 206 N. Pitt – home of Moses Hepburn)

One of these stables, located in an alley behind 206 N. Pitt but with an official address of 214A N. Pitt, is particularly important as OTCA's research shows it was built by Moses Hepburn, a local Alexandrian reputed to be the richest African American in Northern Virginia.

Moses Hepburn was born in Alexandria, the son of William Hepburn and his slave mistress Esther. William Hepburn was among the wealthiest men in the city and raised Moses as one of his children. When William Hepburn died he acknowledged Moses as his legitimate heir and amply provided for him in his will. Moses was given William Hepburn's home, a large section of property along the waterfront, a bond worth \$10,000, a lot of Princess Street and the ground rent from lot #124 on Queen and North Pitt. The bequest made Moses the richest black man in Northern Virginia and one of the richest men in Alexandria.

During his lifetime Moses added to those holdings by purchasing additional property along the river and other parcels. He also used his wealth to purchase property for the founding of Davis Chapel. He was active in other civic affairs as well, serving as a teacher at the Sabbath school of Roberts Memorial and, as the first President of the L.T. Morgan Colored Missionary Society Chapel, raising money for missionary work in Africa.

The 1830 census shows Moses Hepburn domiciled with two slaves and three free blacks. It is possible that the slaves were purchased by Moses with the intent of freeing them or that they were boarded by him. Moses Hepburn's place in Alexandria's African-American history is indisputable. His wealth, extraordinary by the standards of the day, was unprecedented within the local African-American community and allowed him to have wide influence in local affairs. 206 N. Pitt is the only place in Alexandria that Hepburn was known to have lived. The home is listed as an independent property on the National Register of Historic Places and is protected by a façade and open space easement.

A quote from the National Register Nomination best summarizes the importance of Moses Hepburn, 206 N. Pitt and the three adjoining homes (208, 210 & 212) that he built;

“It is noteworthy that these houses (206-212 N. Pitt) were constructed after Alexandria was retroceded back to the state of Virginia, when many restrictive laws against African Americans were passed and enforced. Hepburn's capacity to overcome all of these hardships and succeed illustrates his depth of character and determination as well as his standing in the community. The properties on N. Pitt Street are an important physical reminder of Hepburn's contribution to the development of the city and stand today as a tribute to and testimony of the business acumen and civic leadership of this remarkable early nineteenth century citizen of Alexandria.”

CARRIAGE HOUSE HISTORY

Moses Hepburn bought the lots on which 206-212 N. Pitt are located in 1850 and built four homes; at 206, 208, 210 and 212 N. Pitt in 1850 or 1851. That is known because of the rise in

value of the property between 1850 and 1851. Moses paid \$700 in 1850 for the property. The 1851 tax records show a value for the two lots (four homes) of \$1500, the increase in value indicating that construction had taken place in the preceding year.

The carriage house in question is identified on the BAR staff report as 214A N. Pitt Street. It appears on the 1877 Hopkins map in its current location indicating it was built on or before that date. There is no earlier historical record of the carriage house's existence. However, it sits directly behind 206 on land that was originally part of Moses Hepburn's purchase of the lots. This is known because the property boundaries for the lots purchased by Hepburn along N. Pitt Street in 1850 show an east-west depth of 123.5 feet, a distance that carries to the rear boundaries of the carriage house. Current day boundaries for 206 show a depth of 83.5 feet, a distance that excludes the carriage house.

Although historical records don't reveal the exact construction date of the carriage house, a physical examination of 206 N. Pitt and the carriage house in its rear show that they share the same masonry construction technique, one that is often used to date historic structures. The rule of thumb for dating masonry structures is that the greater the number of stretcher brick rows between header brick rows, the more recent the building. This is because header brick rows made for a stronger wall. Consequently, as the compressive strength of mortar mixes increased over time, more stretcher brick rows could be used without sacrificing the strength of the wall. Said another way, two buildings with varying numbers of stretcher rows between header rows would indicate the two were likely constructed at different times.

In the case of the Hepburn property at 206 N. Pitt and carriage house in its rear, each have 7 rows of stretchers between rows of headers indicating that the structures were likely built at the same time. Further evidence that the buildings were constructed at the same time can be found in the fact that the bricks used to build the two structures share the same dimensions. In addition, the mortar joints in each structure have identical widths, another sign that the buildings were built at the same time, 1851.

Although Moses Hepburn built four homes, 206, 208, 210 and 212 N. Pitt, 206 is the only structure he is known to have lived in. Its significance is noted by its inclusion on the National Register. It is sensible to conclude that a man of his wealth would want to build a carriage house on his own property and evidence strongly suggests that indeed he did and that he stabled his horses there. This carriage house was a working part of his home. As such, it is a very significant part of Alexandria's history and, in particular, the city's African American history.

The carriage house is now threatened by development calling for the demolition and encapsulation of one wall, vast changes to the other exterior walls and the construction of an addition on the north side. These plans would forever change our historic landscape and do irrevocable damage to an essential historic and cultural landmark. Because of the compelling historical and physical evidence that the carriage house was constructed and used by Moses Hepburn, it is important that its exterior be restored to its original appearance and that appropriate signage document the building's connection to Hepburn.

OLD TOWN BUSINESS ACTIVITY

During 2006, the City manager convened a Small Business Task Force, consisting of members from various organizations, including a representative from OTCA. The Task Force was chaired

by Chris Campagna and Amy Harris-White. OTCA's representative was Tim Elliott. The Task Force met with the heads of several city departments to gather facts and thoughts on the processes employed by the departments in dealing with businesses, especially smaller ones. Various business members of the Task Force conveyed anecdotal information about dealing with the city from their viewpoints. Early on, the co-chairs met with the City Manager to present to him the 'easy' recommendations of the group, including such items as 'one-stop' shopping at city hall when applying for permits. During the fall of 2006, the group formed a subcommittee on the SUP process and problems. The subcommittee met several times and presented its thoughts to the full Task Force. Finally at the end of 2006, the Task Force met to consider a final version of the various recommendations. These were finally issued in a report presented to the City Council in June 2007. Mr. Elliott kept the OTCA board advised during the process and, following consultation with the Board, sent the City Manager a 'minority report' (in January 2007) in which he took issue with some of the ultimate recommendations of the majority. His objections were concerned mostly with the thought that the processes for doing business in old town ought to be the same as every other part of the city, even though old town's residents and businesses are in closer vicinity than are the residents and businesses in other part of the city. He also took issue with making changes to the King Street Retail Plan so soon after City Council had endorsed it and when the alleged problems doing business in old town were not borne out in the facts presented by the department heads so as to warrant treating old town businesses like those in Del Ray or other parts of the city.

The full report of the Task Force may be found on the city's website by going to the City homepage, clicking on Planning and Zoning and then searching "Small Business Task Force". The city is planning to hold community and business meetings this month, but has not yet set a schedule for those meetings. If you are interested in the meetings, stay tuned to the city's website.

WHERE WE HAVE BEEN

Attended a number of meetings regarding the Cecchi/IDI development at Hunting Terrace/Hunting Towers. Talked to all seven Planning Commissioners regarding the 150 building height sought by the developer. The code clearly calls for no more than 50 foot buildings (Washington Street Standards) even if an extraordinary contribution to affordable housing is made. Let's see who votes to uphold the law..... Appealed the building of a structure abutting Moses Hepburn's historic stable at 214A Pitt Street. The appeal was made to Council after the BAR approved a less than desirable structure.....Pointed out to the Mayor and City Staff the number of deficiencies regarding the King Street frontage of the Monaco Hotel. The overhang, the Jackson 20 sign, colors (orange and fuchsia) and the signage were not approved. In addition, we cited the complaints of a number of citizens regarding the backing up of traffic on King Street as a result of the valet parking, which was installed against OTCA's wishes. We recommended they put the valet parking at the hotel parking entrance on Pitt Street. Attended the Council's approval of the waterfront amenities in anticipation of the opening of National Harbor. None of the three major areas of concern to OTCA were not and never have been fully addressed by the City. These are the motorcycles on King Street, Tour Buses in the Old and Historic District and parking in Old Town. Your President has addressed all three of these concerns on numerous occasions at the Collaborative Meetings, however to no avail. If anyone is listening, they sure haven't taken any positive actions to solve these problems.....A number of cars in Old Town have been broken into in the last couple of weeks. A car was broken into on the 29th of

January at S. Lee and Jefferson. Cash was stolen from the car. Two cars in the 300 block of S. Lee were broken into on the 25th of January along with another break-in on the corner of S. Lee and Wolfe that same night. **THAT'S A TOTAL OF 4 BREAK-INS IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD.** Please be vigilant and keep your cars locked at all times and be on the lookout for any undesirables in our neighborhood. Call the Police when in doubt.

CONGRESSMAN MORAN TAKES CARE OF ALEXANDRIA

Washington Post. Washington, D.C., December 20th – Congressman Jim Moran, Virginia Democrat and senior member of the House Appropriations Committee, included a number of environmentally related projects in the FY'08 Omnibus Appropriations bill (HR 2764). Congress approved the Omnibus bill earlier this week. The bill was sent to President Bush's desk and he has indicated he will sign it into law.

“Significant funding to improve the quality of our local streams, rivers, bays and the air we breathe was included in the omnibus,” said Moran. “Our natural resources must be protected, but doing so comes with a price tag. The health of our environment is a Democratic priority and that was reflected in this legislation.”

\$31 million for the EPA's Chesapeake Bay Restoration Program. Continues a moratorium on oil and gas drilling off-shore of the East and West U.S. coastlines. A study of the health effects of trona, a naturally found mineral used by Mirant's Potomac River in its pollution mitigation strategy. The only studies to date were conducted by industry and have determined that among a list of potential health hazards, repeated exposure can cause silicosis (a progressive lung disease) and possibly cancer, as stated on the website of Solvay Chemicals, the sole producer of refined trona in the U.S. Under a section titled environmental precautions, it also states "Should not be released into the environment." Mirant's Potomac River Power Plant began using trona to reduce their output of harmful pollutants in 2005 after they were found to be in violation of National Ambient Air Quality Standards SO₂ (sulfur dioxide), PM₁₀ (particulate matter) and NO_x (nitrogen dioxide).

\$1 million for the Four Mile Run project, a joint venture with the City of Alexandria and Arlington County to transform the current urbanized cement stream channel into a natural stream that can be used for wildlife habitat and local recreation. The appropriation includes funding to complete the environmental study for the project.

\$984,000 for Nature Serve, a national non-profit conservation organization whose mission is to provide the scientific basis for effective conservation action. Nature Serve and its network of natural heritage programs are the leading source for information about rare and endangered species and threatened ecosystems.

\$689,000 for Fairfax County to restore a 2,500 foot segment of the Indian Run watershed between Edsall Road and Bren Mar Drive. The funds would also go towards developing a separate management plan for a 370 acre watershed in the Falls Hill and Poplar Heights communities.

\$492,000 to continue a Mid-Potomac River study on environmental restoration options along the Cameron Run/Holmes Run watershed.

\$357,000 to the Audubon at Home program which assists homeowners in the design of their properties in a more wildlife and plant life friendly way. Several public garden demonstration sites in Northern Virginia are planned along with the development of a national, web-based information center.

\$282,000 for the Earth Conservation Corps to expand its nationally recognized River of Hope program which provides unemployed youth from Anacostia, D.C. neighborhoods an opportunity to gain job skills while working on restoration projects along the Anacostia River.

\$98,000 to continue assistance for a quad-state (Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia and Pennsylvania) comprehensive Potomac River tributaries study.

\$98,000 to renovate the Lee-Fendall House. The Lee-Fendall House Museum and Garden is owned and operated by the Virginia Trust for Historic Preservation. The Virginia Trust for Historic Preservation is a public, non-profit educational institution whose mission is to preserve the architectural and historic value of the Lee-Fendall House and gardens, to stimulate the public's knowledge of and appreciation for the history of Virginia and the nation, and to advance the cause of historic preservation.

\$49,000 to upgrade and ensure ADA compliance for the historic Gadsby's Tavern in Alexandria. Operated by John Gadsby between 1796 and 1808, the tavern and hotel were the settings for political, business and social life in early Alexandria. George Washington enjoyed the hospitality provided by tavern keepers and twice attended the annual Birthnight Ball held in his honor. Other prominent patrons included John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and the Marquis de Lafayette.

THE NEXT OTCA MEMBERSHIP MEETING IS ON THE 12TH OF MARCH

*Townsend A. "Van" Van Fleet
President, Old Town Civic Association, Inc.*