



Committed to historic preservation and conservation in Arlington County

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Gulf Branch, the MoMA Lustron, and More: AHA's 2009 Endangered List

In an economic downturn, it is even more important that citizens have meaningful and historic places to visit that are affordable and close to home—such as public libraries, neighborhood eateries, and nature centers. We have emphasized locations like these on AHA's 2009 list of Arlington's most endangered historic places. Modeled after the National Trust for Historic Preservation's annual roster of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places, our ninth-annual local list highlights some of the county's most beloved places and building types: **the Gulf Branch Nature Center, Neighborhood Branch Libraries, the MoMA Lustron, Neighborhood Shopping Centers, and Early Arlington Houses.**

In our report, which has been uploaded to our web site, we discuss the threats facing these endangered places and why they are so significant to Arlington County's identity. **Gulf Branch Nature Center**, the county's first nature center, was threatened with closure and demolition and still has an uncertain future. **Neighborhood branch libraries** such as Cherrydale, Glencarlyn, and Aurora Hills have also been targeted for budget cuts. **Arlington's MoMA Lustron**, which was disassembled in 2006 and was reassembled for a highly acclaimed exhibit in New York's Museum of Modern Art, is now languishing again in storage with no plan for its permanent reassembly. **Neighborhood shopping centers**, such as the Lee Gardens and Buckingham centers, are facing increasing pressure to be redeveloped. Lee Gardens, in fact, could be demolished at any time. Finally, we profile threats to **Arlington's early houses**, such as Reevesland, the Veitch-Thomas house, and the Charles Drew house, which are located on large lots that are vulnerable to subdivision. As always, our report includes solutions and suggestions that would help protect these properties for future generations of Arlingtonians to admire, appreciate, and use.

We also produced our annual Watch List: the **Tomb of the Unknowns, the Wilson School, Columbia Pike, and Civil War Earthworks**, as well as the soon-to-be-demolished **Crystal City Industrial Buildings**. Some of these places are still at risk; others need to be monitored to ensure that they are protected in the future.

It's not too early to start thinking about our 2010 Endangered List—if there is a place in Arlington that you care about that faces some threat, please do not hesitate to let us know. Contact Kim O'Connell at kim@greenquill.com.

Arlington Heritage Alliance CELEBRATES 20 YEARS!

On the evening of May 27th, the Board of Directors of AHA, members, and interested community members gathered in the Tiffany Gallery of the Arlington Arts Center at the historic Maury School to celebrate the Alliance's 20 years of commitment to preserving the county's historic sites, neighborhoods, and natural and cultural resources. The meeting space was meaningful, as 20 years ago, the fledgling AHA met in the same building to celebrate its first year.

The evening's events included the unveiling of AHA's 2009 List of Arlington's Most Endangered Places, tables displaying artifacts and images from some Arlington landmarks, a slide presentation highlighting AHA's accomplishments, and of course refreshments. The main program was a panel of distinguished community preservationists who facilitated a discussion titled "Preservation Perspectives in Arlington, 1989-2009." The panelists included founding AHA members Sara Amy Leach and Judy Muniec, and HALRB member and former chair, Kevin Vincent. The lively discussion illuminated

changes to the county and its environment, revealed some amusing stories from the panelists and the audience, outlined lessons learned from the past, and elicited ideas for how to move forward in preserving Arlington's past in the future.

AHA Annual Meeting – Comings & Goings...

At AHA's annual meeting on May 27th, the Alliance said a fond farewell to three dedicated board members, Laura Bobeczko (former chair), Charles Monfort, and long-time treasurer, Margaret Welsh. Please keep in touch, friends!

The membership also elected two new board members, Eric Dobson and former member, Jennifer Perunko. A lifelong resident of Arlington, **Eric Dobson** is a planner by training. He is a former member and past-chair of the Arlington County Planning Commission and former president of the Cherrydale Citizens Association. He also served as executive director of the Clarendon Alliance from 1993 to 1997. **Jennifer Perunko** is a returning director; she currently works as a historian with the National Cemetery Administration, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. She holds a Master of Arts in Historic Preservation from Goucher College.

Four existing directors, Tom Dickinson, Virginia Price, Kathryn Smith, and Caridad de la Vega, were re-elected to the Board.

AHA Presents Heritage Award to Constance Ramirez

This year, the Arlington Heritage Alliance recognizes the dedication, determination, and consummate networking skills of long-time Arlington resident and preservation advocate **Constance "Connie" Ramirez** with the Alliance's 2009 Heritage Award. Connie has served on AHA's board and three years ago, initiated the Preservation Brown Bag Lunch series with the help of county Preservation staff. The monthly, informal discussions are held at the County Government building, which brings preservation perspectives and education to county staff and elected officials, as well as providing a forum for citizens to learn about preservation issues in the County and to express their views.

Connie serves as Director of the Federal Preservation Institute, an office of the National Park Service that provides training in historic preservation to all federal agencies. She previously worked as Preservation Officers for the Department of the Army and the U.S. General Services Administration. She has taught graduate courses in preservation planning for the University of Virginia and George Washington University for many years, and has been a frequent panelist and guest speaker at symposiums and seminars. Connie has brought enthusiasm, energy, and clearly articulated views to all her efforts.

Originally from Annapolis and an Arlington resident since 1969, Connie contributed significantly to local preservation efforts as a former Chair of Arlington's Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board and a founding member and former Board Member of AHA.

Her tireless work and creative ideas, along with her uncanny ability to motivate and get people excited about preservation have made her a priceless resource for our community.

Thanks Connie!

AHA to Co-Sponsor Monthly Preservation Brown-Bag Lunch Lectures

AHA is proud to be a new cosponsor of the Historic Arlington Roundtable, a popular monthly lecture series on history and preservation topics. Produced in conjunction with the county's historic preservation office, these brown-bag lunch lectures are casual and informative ways to learn about new projects in the county, pressing threats to county resources, and of course, Arlington's diverse history. The Historic Arlington Roundtable meets the first Tuesday of each month at the County Building at 2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Conference Room 715. The brown-bag lunches convene promptly at 12:15 pm and usually begin with a round of introductions of attendees and short announcements, followed by the main presentation. The lunches end by 1:15 pm at the latest. This is a great way to meet likeminded history buffs and preservation advocates and learn more about our county!



We are currently working with county staff to line up new speakers for the coming months. To suggest a speaker or topic, or to be added to the email list for the lecture series, contact Cynthia Liccese-Torres at cliccese@arlingtonva.us or Kim O'Connell at kim@greenquill.com.

AHA/AHS Joint Tour of Fort Myer's Historic Commissary Sergeant's Quarters

Approximately 70 people attended this special tour, which began at the Officer's Club Old Guard Lounge. Tom Dickinson, the tour planner and organizer, welcomed the group, and thanked Ms. Leah Rubalcaba of the Fort Myer Community Relations office, and Mr. Kim Holien, Ft. Myer Historian, who led and narrated the tour. Tom then introduced Colonel Laura Richardson, 100th Garrison Commander of the Fort Myer Military Community, who provided 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 idea for this tour came from an informal conversation between Tom and the Fort Myer historian, in October, 2008. Tom invited Mr. Holien to attend the AHA-sponsored tour of an exhibition on prefabricated housing at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, which featured Arlington's salvaged Krowne Lustron. Noting the similarity, Mr. Holien mentioned the existence of a late nineteenth century modular house located at Ft Myer. Tom then contacted Ms. Rubalcaba, whose efforts were instrumental in attaining access to the 1877 house, which is located in a secure area on the base. The modest house is the last surviving example of hundreds—perhaps thousands—constructed at military reservations throughout the United States.

Formally known as the Commissary Sergeants Quarters, the building was designed by Civil War General Montgomery Meigs, Quartermaster General of the U.S. Army, and reflects his commitment to provide economical, permanent housing for all ranks in the Army. According to a U.S. Army publication on the building "the design for the Commissary Sergeant's Quarters is based on an early standardized plan developed in response to widespread public outcry at the poor living conditions of the military, especially for enlisted men and noncommissioned officers."

The interlocking horizontal plank construction was 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 its destination. All doors and windows were pre-assembled, and then simply nailed into existing wall openings. Mass production of all component parts kept costs low, and allowed for standardization and interchangeability of all component pieces.

Attendees were allowed to tour the house, which is now used by the Army Officers Wives Club of the Greater Washington Area. 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 United States.

Mr. Holien spoke about the 1992 restoration of the house. Over time the original building was enlarged and modified; the restoration returned the structure to its original size, form and appearance. At this time the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) completed photographic and written documentation on the house, which provides valuable insights into the home life of non-commissioned officers in late nineteenth century and the importance to the Army of providing adequate housing following the Civil War.

Membership Renewal Reminder ... Your Involvement Is Essential!

Thank you to all those who have renewed their AHA membership this spring. Your participation and support are the key to preservation activities in Arlington, and AHA appreciates having your input and assistance. We are moving to a more electronic format, helping to stay on top of preservation and community concerns through the list serve and hoping to make communication easier among members; going electronic also will conserve organizational costs and so your preservation dollars will go further. Please provide the membership chair with your email address (va.price@yahoo.com) in order to get the latest news, updates, and information! And if you have not yet renewed your membership for 2009, please consider doing so today.



Arlington Historical Society
joint meeting with
Arlington Heritage Alliance

Thursday, November 12, 2009
7PM-9PM

"Memories of
Washington-Lee High School
through the Decades"

Special Guests:
Washington Lee High School
Alumni Association

Location:
Washington Lee High School
The Commons - 1st floor
1301 N. Stafford St.

For more information:
703.228.5955