



VOLUME XXVIII NUMBER 3 NEWSLETTER MARCH 2009

MARCH MEETING

DATE: Wednesday, March 25, 2009

PLACE: The Lyceum, 201 South Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia

TIME: 7:30 PM

SPEAKER: James D. Bish

Alexandria: From Farm, to Port, to Town, and the Importance of the West Family

James D. Bish, who has been studying the West family for many years, will talk about “Alexandria: From Farm, to Port, to Town, and the Importance of the West Family.” His lecture will center around the land that became Alexandria from 1700 to 1749, and how it evolved from a tobacco farm to a tobacco port of export to the town of Alexandria. For the period 1730 through 1755, the talk will concentrate on Hugh West and his eldest son, John West, Jr., and their importance to the founding and early development of Alexandria.

- The Wests were in Alexandria before there was an Alexandria, operating a tobacco inspection station and warehouses, a ferry, and a tavern on the river at the foot of what today is Oronoco Street.
- A West did the first survey of Alexandria, and a West conducted the first auction of Alexandria town lots.
- Wests represented Alexandria in the House of Burgesses during the important 22 years from 1752 to 1774.
- A West was a rector of Christ Church during the Revolutionary War; and the Wests provided a Chapel of Ease (near the intersection of today’s Princess and Pitt Streets) before there was a church in Alexandria.



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About Our March 25 Speaker. *(Continued from Page 1)* The Wests were of great importance in the founding and early development of Alexandria, but they seem to be overlooked in most histories of Alexandria. James Bish will try to change that on March 25. James D. Bish is Chair of the Social Studies Department of Woodbridge Senior High School, where he has taught history for 22 years. He earned his BA at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, and his MA in history at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The author of numerous articles for history and genealogy journals, he was WSHS Educator of the Year in 2004 and 1999, a nominee for the Washington Post Agnes Meyer Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award in 2001, and a DAR American History Teacher of the Year in 1999.

May 27 Society Meeting (7:30 PM at The Lyceum) – “Mary Surratt: An American Tragedy” Lecture by Elizabeth Steger Trindal.

In commemoration of the Bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln, Elizabeth Steger Trindal, author of *Mary Surratt: An American Tragedy*, will tell the controversial story of Mary Surratt. On July 7, 1865, Mary Elizabeth Jenkins Surratt was hanged as one of the alleged conspirators in the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. She was born in 1823 near what is now Clinton, Maryland. From November 26, 1835, until 1839, she attended the Academy for Young Ladies, which was affiliated with St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Alexandria. The Academy was located at the corner of Duke and Fairfax Streets. It closed in 1839, and the building eventually was demolished for a parking lot.



Ms. Trindal’s talk will encompass Mary Surratt’s years at the academy; her unhappy marriage to John Surratt; her children; her life during the Civil War; the death of her husband; her move to Washington, DC; establishing a boarding house on H Street; meeting John Wilkes Booth; the death of the President; her arrest; her trial; and finally her execution. Ms. Trindal argues that Mary Surratt was innocent.

Elizabeth Steger Trindal was born in Alexandria, and is a long-time member of the Alexandria Historical Society. Prior to her husband’s retirement as an engineer at Fort Belvoir, she lived near Mount Vernon, but she currently lives in the Shenandoah Valley. During her working years, she was a collection officer with the Internal Revenue Service in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. An award-winning free lance writer, Ms. Trindal is past president and vice president of the National League of American Pen Women, Valley of Virginia Branch. She devoted fifteen years to researching and writing *Mary Surratt: An American Tragedy*.

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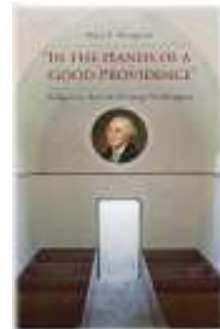
2009 Alexandria History Award Nominations. The Alexandria Historical Society is calling for nominations for the 2009 Alexandria History Award, to be presented to a person or persons who have made noteworthy contributions to the preservation of the historic, cultural, and artistic heritage of Alexandria. Honorees will be presented with a certificate and gift at a special awards ceremony on Wednesday, April 22, at 7:30 p.m., at The Lyceum, 201 South Washington Street. Four outstanding history students from each of Alexandria's high schools will also be honored at the ceremony.

Organizations and interested individuals are invited to submit written nominations to the History Award Committee of the Alexandria Historical Society. Each nomination should be in the form of a narrative, no longer than two pages, which explains in some detail the contributions of the nominee. Copies of the nominee's work, including publications, should be included. More than one nomination may be offered, and the committee may select more than one person to receive the History Award. The committee will give particular consideration to those individuals who have written research papers, theses, dissertations, books and materials, which publicly disseminate information on the social and cultural history of the area. AHS Board Members are not eligible for the award. Nominations should be mailed by March 9 to the Office of Historic Alexandria, 220 North Washington Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. For more information about the 2009 History Award, contact Douglas Thurman of the Alexandria Historical Society at (703) 548-7052.

The 2008 History Award honoree was historian William Seale, a leading authority on the preservation and restoration of historic properties, for his book, *The Alexandria Library Company*. Other History Award winners include T. Michael Miller, Jean Taylor Federico, General George Kundahl, Dr. Alton S. Wallace, Lillie Finklea, William Francis Smith, Dr. James D. Munson, Ellen Donald, Anna Lynch, Catherine B. Hollan, Edith Moore Sprouse, Dr. Pamela J. Cressey, Mona Leithiser Dearborn, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Joynt, Effie Crittenden Dunstan, and Dr. Oscar P. Fitzgerald.

April 22 Society Meeting (7:30 PM at The Lyceum) – Alexandria History Awards with Lecture by Dr. Ben Vinson III. The 2009 Alexandria History Awards will be presented by Senator Patsy Ticer at our April 22 meeting. The guest speaker will be Dr. Ben Vinson III, who received a 1988 Alexandria High School History Award. This inspired him to pursue history as an undergraduate at Dartmouth and to eventually get a Ph.D. in history from Columbia University. Today, he is a Professor of History and Director of the Center for Africana Studies at the Johns Hopkins University. A reception will follow the awards ceremony and lecture.

June 24 Society Meeting (7:30 PM at The Lyceum) – “In the Hands of a Good Providence: Religion in the Life of George Washington” Lecture by Mary V. Thompson. Mary V. Thompson, the research historian at Mount Vernon, will discuss her new book *“In the Hands of a Good Providence”: Religion in the Life of George Washington*. The religious practices and beliefs of George Washington, Alexandria's most famous son, have been very controversial subjects in the past; and Mary Thompson's book no doubt will become the definitive authority on those subjects.



ALEXANDRIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. NEWSLETTER

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*The purpose of the Society shall be to promote an active interest in American history and particularly in the history of Alexandria and of Virginia.
The Society is organized exclusively for educational purposes.*

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