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NEWSLETTER

MAY 2009

MAY MEETING

DATE: Wednesday, May 27, 2009

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

TIME: 7:30 PM

SPEAKER: Elizabeth Steger Trindal, Author

Mary Surratt: An American Tragedy

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.

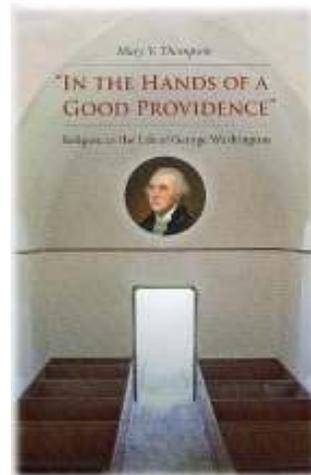
Ms. Trindal's talk will encompass Mary Surratt's years at the academy; her unhappy marriage to John Surratt; her children; her life during the Civil War; the death of her husband; her move to Washington, DC; establishing a boarding house on H Street; meeting John Wilkes Booth; the death of the President; 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*.



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 and recipient of the 2009 Alexandria History Award, will discuss her new book *“In the Hands of a Good Providence”: Religion in the Life of George Washington*. George Washington’s religious practices and beliefs have been very controversial subjects in the past, and this book no doubt will become the definitive authority on those subjects. *“In the Hands of a Good Providence”* moves beyond modern arguments regarding whether The Father of Our Country was an evangelical Christian or a Deist. Thompson concludes that Washington was a devout Anglican of a Latitudinarian bent. She focuses on the important place religion occupied in his life, as well as his support for religious freedom in the early development of our country. Regardless of his personal preference for a specific denomination, Washington believed that religion was an important aspect of a strong and successful nation. He often expressed an opinion that a nation needed a set of shared values, and that religion encouraged a sense of morality, civility, and concern for fellow citizens. Much of his religious philosophy was formed in Alexandria. Ms. Thompson will tell how she wrote the book and focus on some Alexandria residents featured in the book.



Mary Thompson has worked at Mount Vernon for over 28 years as a mansion docent, curatorial assistant, and museum registrar. For the past ten years, she has served as Mount Vernon’s Research Historian, where she has conducted groundbreaking investigations of amazingly diverse topics, ranging from slavery and religion, to the personalities of George and Martha Washington’s favorite pets, to the delicacies that appeared on their table. Few individuals have made so many noteworthy contributions to the preservation and promulgation of knowledge about Alexandria’s most famous son, George Washington.

Auditors Needed. If you would be willing to assist with the annual audit of the Alexandria Historical Society’s financial records this summer, please telephone President Audrey Davis at (703) 838-4356, Ext. 11.

Website Improvements. Substantial improvements were made recently to the society’s website, www.alexandriahistorical.org. Many thanks to New Target, our website provider, for their outstanding assistance with this effort.

Alexandria and District of Columbia Needlework Identification Day. On Friday, May 15 from 12:30 PM to 4:30 PM, experts will be available at the Lyceum, 201 South Washington Street in Alexandria, to tell you about your antique needlework. If you have 18th and 19th century samplers and pictorial needlework, particularly from this area, and you would like to know more about it and how to care for it, call the Lyceum at (703) 838-4994 to reserve a time-slot with the experts. A \$5 contribution per piece is requested and includes full museum admission.

Alexandria Historical Society Elections, 2009-2010. At the May 27 meeting, members will vote on a slate of candidates for Society Officers and open Board seats for the 2009-2010 term. The nominating committee, consisting of Mary Ruth Coleman as Chair and Bob Madison, Jim Johnson and Dr. Pam Cressey as members, has recommended the following nominees:

President	<i>Audrey Davis</i>
Vice President	<i>Bob Madison</i>
Secretary	<i>Ted Pulliam</i>
Treasurer	<i>Anne Paul</i>

For Board of Directors:

<i>Amy Bertsch</i>	Term to end 2012
<i>Linda Greenberg</i>	Term to end 2012
<i>Karen Wilkins</i>	Term to end 2012

Continuing Members of the Board include:

<i>Amy Breedlove</i>	Term to end 2010
<i>Katy Cannady</i>	Term to end 2011
<i>Mary Ruth Coleman</i>	Term to end 2011
<i>Henry Desmarais</i>	Term to end 2010
<i>Bill Dickinson</i>	Term to end 2011
<i>Peggy Gross</i>	Term to end 2011
<i>Laura Mae Sudder</i>	Term to end 2010
<i>Douglas Thurman</i>	Ex Officio (Immediate Past President)

The entire Society owes a special debt of gratitude to *Bunny Jacob*, who is retiring from the Board, for her hard work over many years. A charter member of the Society, *Bunny Jacob* was President from 1979 to 1981, Vice President from 1977 to 1979, and a Board member from 1981 to 1984 and 2002 to 2009. We will miss her experience and expertise.

Retirement Party for T. Michael Miller. Mike Miller, our City Historian, is retiring; and everybody is invited to his retirement party from 5:00 to 7:00 PM on May 15 at the Lloyd House, 220 North Washington Street in Alexandria. It is free, but RSVPs are requested via telephone to (703) 838-4554 or email to madeline.shaw@alexandriava.gov.

Probably nobody has done more to preserve Alexandria history than Mike Miller. The only person ever to receive both the Alexandria History Award and an Alexandria Historical Society Special Award, he has served our society as President from 1994 to 1996, as Vice President for three years, as a Board member for an additional twelve years, and as editor of the *Alexandria Chronicle* from 1993 until 2005. Nobody has written more about the history of Alexandria than T. Michael Miller. The catalog of the Alexandria Public Library lists 30 books on Alexandria history by T. Michael Miller. In addition to editing the *Alexandria Chronicle*, he edited the *Fireside Sentinel* from 1987 until 1994; and he assisted countless local authors with their research on Alexandria History. Mike Miller will be sorely missed by the entire Alexandria history community.

ALEXANDRIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. NEWSLETTER

201 SOUTH WASHINGTON STREET, ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314

President: Audrey Davis, (703) 838-4356, Ext. 11

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The AHS Newsletter is published by the Alexandria Historical Society, Inc., and mailed free to members. To join the Society, submit your check made payable to "Alexandria Historical Society," together with your name, address, and telephone numbers, to the Alexandria Historical Society, 201 South Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314. Annual dues are: \$10.00, Student; \$20.00, Single; \$30.00, Couple; \$50.00, Sustaining; and \$100.00, Patron. The membership year is July to June. Dues are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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.

