

The ALEXANDRIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

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NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2016

DATE: Wednesday, June 22, 2016

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

TIME: 7:30 PM

SPEAKER: Audrey Davis, director, Alexandria Black History Museum, *Mercy Street* historical advisor
Sarah Coster, former site director, Carlyle House

LECTURE

THE TRUE HISTORY OF THE MANSION HOUSE HOSPITAL: Nurses, Doctors and Contraband Slaves in Civil War Alexandria

The story of Alexandria, Virginia during the American Civil War is more than the often-told one of “brother against brother” that usually sets the tragic tone for our most bloody conflict. Alexandria, a Southern city within a seceded state just across the Potomac River from the seat of the Federal government, was occupied by the Union Army for the duration of the war. Many local residents opposed secession before the war began, while others were caught up in the “war fever” that gripped the South and sent their men and boys to join the Confederate Army on the morning of May 24, 1861. For the next four years,



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

the city became a mix of loyal and “secesh” with wounded from both sides, garrison troops and Confederate POWs, long-time residents and new arrivals, and free blacks and those still enslaved.

Seized and occupied primarily for its excellent port and rail facilities, Alexandria soon became a huge supply depot and hospital center for the Union. As the sick and wounded flowed back north on trains and hospital ships, large public buildings were taken by the Federal government and converted into military hospitals. The largest of these was the Mansion House Hotel, owned and operated by furniture maker James Green and his family. Several hundred wounded men could be treated and housed in the

Please arrive early—seating is limited. Free for AHS members--\$5 for all others.



Audrey Davis

elegant hotel-turned-hospital and two of the nurses who worked there left journals that detailed their experiences. In February 2016, PBS aired a new drama series entitled ***Mercy Street***, which portrays these two women, members of the Green family, and the hospital and town in which they lived and worked. The series will return this coming winter.

Sarah Coster, former site director of the Carlyle House, and Audrey Davis, director of the Alexandria Black History Museum as well as historical advisor to the series ***Mercy Street***, will share some of the

many stories connected with the Mansion House during this fascinating period. Ms. Davis will also talk about being a historical advisor to ***Mercy Street***. The Carlyle House, the 18th-century home of one of Alexandria’s founders—John Carlyle—was, for many years, hidden behind the hotel built by James Green. The historic house was revealed once again and restored in time for the nation’s Bicentennial following the hotel’s demolition in the early 1970s.



Sarah Coster

Offered by the Alexandria Historical Society, the talk is open to the public and doors open at 7:00 PM. The program is free for members and there is a nominal charge of \$5 for non-members; a membership table on-site will allow people to join the Society that evening. Parking is extremely limited at The Lyceum but there are garages and street parking available nearby.

New Programs to be Offered by the Alexandria Historical Society!

Starting this fall, AHS will offer a variety of new programs! Visit our website for details. Also, wait for our July, September and October 2016 newsletters. <https://alexandriahistoricalociety.wildapricot.org/>

Fall Lectures

September 28: “From Arlandria to Chirilagua: The Remaking of a Northern Virginia Neighborhood, 1960s – 1980s.” Dr. Krystyn Moon, Associate Professor of History and American Studies at the University of Mary Washington, will explore a neighborhood that reflects the way in which American immigration and Cold War policies changed the demographics of Northern Virginia. In 1938, Arlandria was home to thousands of white, middle-class government workers, but by the 1960s, floods, violence, white flight, and stagflation characterized the neighborhood. In 1975, refugees began to make Arlandria their home and the neighborhood was nicknamed “Chirilagua” after a community in El Salvador.

October 26: “What a Photograph Tells Us: Black Soldiers Fight for Equality on the Battlefield and in the Hospital.” Charles Joyce, guest researcher and writer for the Spencer Research Library at the University of Kansas, traces the history of Francis Snow’s historical photograph of the United States Colored Troops (USCT) at L’Ouverture Hospital in Alexandria. Not only are images of USCT soldiers uncommon, but remarkably, each man in the photograph is identified, providing an unusual opportunity to determine what happened to the men following the Civil War.

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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.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
www.alexandriahistorical.org