

The ALEXANDRIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

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NEWSLETTER

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DATE: Wednesday, October 28, 2015

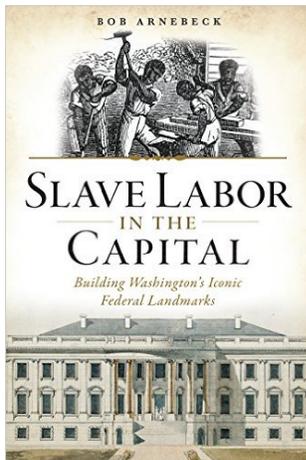
PLACE: The Lyceum, 201 South Washington Street, Alexandria, Va.

TIME: 7:30 PM

SPEAKER: Bob Arnebeck, Author

LECTURE

Slave Labor in the Capital: Building Washington's Iconic Federal Landmarks



In 1798, a Polish tourist inspecting construction underway at the U.S. Capitol was amazed to see a large number of men he soon discovered to be slaves working on the new edifice. He was even more surprised to learn that their masters had hired them out and retained all of their earnings for themselves. In 1791, George Washington had appointed a commission to build the future capital of the new nation. The commission found that paying masters of far-off Maryland plantations sixty dollars annually for their slaves made it easier to maintain low wages for the free workers who flocked to Washington, D.C. Fully half of the men constructing the two most iconic Washington landmarks—the Capitol and the White House—were slaves. They moved stones for Scottish masons, sawed lumber for Irish carpenters, cut trees and baked bricks. The slaves left no memoirs but author Bob Arnebeck, based on his research in the commissioners' records, has been able to reconstruct their world of dawn-to-dusk work, salt pork and corn bread, white scorn, a sympathetic nurse and moments when everything depended on their skills.

Please join us in welcoming Mr. Arnebeck, who is also the author of *Through a Fiery Trial: Building Washington, 1790 – 1800* (Madison Books, 1991) and *Proust's Last Beer: A History of Curious Demises* (Penguin Books, 1980). He was born in Washington, D.C., graduated from Montgomery Blair High School and then Beloit College in Beloit, Wisconsin. After college he produced a dramatic poem history of the Ford Motor Company, worked for the government's American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, leaked documents to Jeremy Rifkin's People's Bicentennial Commission and wrote a story

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

for the *Washington Post Magazine* about leaking documents. He then began a career as a freelance writer specializing in humor, out of which grew *Proust's Last Beer*, and history, which led to the publication of *Through a Fiery Trial*. He provided commentaries for NPR's Morning Edition for a couple of years, wrote a manuscript on Benjamin Rush and the yellow fever epidemics of 1790s and then left Washington, D.C. in 1994 for an island in the St. Lawrence River. Mr. Arnebeck currently writes about beavers and otters and web articles on Washington history.



Mercy Street Premieres on PBS on Sunday, January 17, 2016

At 10:00 PM on Sunday, January 17, 2016, ***Mercy Street*** will premiere on PBS, taking viewers beyond the battlefield of the Civil War and into the lives of two volunteer nurses on opposite sides of the conflict as they collide at Mansion House, the luxury hotel owned by the Green family of Alexandria and taken over and transformed into a Union Army hospital. Ruled under martial law, Alexandria has become the melting pot of region, filled with soldiers, civilians, female volunteers, doctors, wounded fighting men from both sides, runaway slaves, prostitutes, speculators and spies.

The Real Mercy Street: The History of the Mansion House Hospital and Civil War Alexandria

Saturday, January 30, 2016, 10 a.m. at the Carlyle House, 121 N. Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA 22314.

Go behind the scenes and learn about the true story of the nurses, doctors, soldiers and Alexandrians who star in PBS's new series ***Mercy Street***. The program will begin in one of the original lobbies of the famous hospital, normally closed to the public, with coffee, bagels and a presentation lead by Sarah Coster, curator of the exhibit ***Nurses, Soldiers, Spies: The Mansion House Hospital***, and Audrey Davis, historical consultant for ***Mercy Street*** and Director of the Alexandria Black History Museum. Then, join us for tours of the Carlyle House, the Green family's stately Southern mansion whose history goes back to the 1740s.

COST: \$10 for Alexandria Historical Society and Friends of Carlyle House members and \$20 for all others. Visit www.alexandriahistorical.org to become a member.

Alexandria Historical Society 2015-2016 Speaker Schedule*

March 23, 2016: ***Woodward & Lothrop: A Store Worthy of the Nation's Capital*** (Michael Lisicky). **April 27, 2016:** ***Alexandria History Awards***. **May 25, 2016:** ***Alexandria's 1939 Library Sit-in: Its Impact, Aftermath & Legacy*** (Dr. Brenda Mitchell-Powell). **June 22, 2016:** ***The Real Mercy Street*** (Sarah Coster and Audrey Davis).

*Lectures are free for Alexandria Historical Society members and \$5 for non-members. All lectures are on the fourth Wednesday of the month at The Lyceum at 7:30 PM.

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201 SOUTH WASHINGTON STREET, ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314

President: Debra P. Ackerman, alexandriahistoricalociety@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor: Jackie Cohan, 703.746.4753

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