

# 2015 Annual Report



*Lee-Fendall House*

MUSEUM AND GARDEN

**VIRGINIA TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

**614 Oronoco Street**

**Alexandria, Virginia 22314**

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## **A. Executive Summary**

The Lee-Fendall House Museum & Garden is a historic home and garden in Old Town Alexandria, Virginia. Built in 1785 by Phillip R. Fendall of Maryland on land purchased from his cousin, General Henry “Light Horse Harry” Lee, the House was home to 37 members of the Lee family until 1903. The Downham family purchased the house in 1903, living in it until 1931. Labor activist John L. Lewis purchased the house in 1937, living here till his death in 1969. In 1972, the Virginia Trust for Historic Preservation acquired the house and established it as the Lee-Fendall House Museum & Garden. In 2014 the Trust continues to oversee its operations.

The following report is a review and description of the Museum’s activities and operations conducted in fulfillment of its mission during 2015. The Annual Report published by the Trust/Museum is available in hard copy and electronically on the Museum website, [www.leefendallhouse.org](http://www.leefendallhouse.org). The report concludes with an assessment of 2015, and plans for the Museum during the next year. The Museum continues to enjoy the goodwill of its neighbors, the respect of the professional community, and the guidance of a professional staff and talented Board of Directors. Its challenges continue to be met with strategic planning and collaborative teamwork.

## **B. Mission**

The mission of the Virginia Trust for Historic Preservation is to promote historic preservation and education by preserving, rehabilitating, maintaining, and interpreting the Lee-Fendall House Museum, gardens, and collection, thus serving as a community resource for the city of Alexandria.

To these ends the Virginia Trust for Historic Preservation:

- Maintains the Lee-Fendall House according to the best preservation standards to assure its enjoyment for future generations
- Develops, conserves, maintains and uses a collection of tangible objects
- Interprets to a wide public, through exhibits and educational programs, the role of the inhabitants of the Lee-Fendall House from 1785 to 1969 in the development of the City of Alexandria, the region, and the nation.

▪

## **C. 2014 Events**

### **▪ House Tours**

The Museum offered 40-minute public tours according to a regular hourly Wednesday through Sunday. Total visitor-ship figures were 4360 people at our tours, special events, and rentals.

### **▪ Lee Birthday Celebration**

NPS Ranger Matt Penrod from Arlington House NHS presented a lecture on ongoing restoration projects at Arlington House in our annual January Lee birthday observance.

### **▪ Easter Egg Hunt**

The 2015 Annual Easter Egg Hunt continued with a three-day schedule with a total of six sessions over the weekend. Attendance continued to be full for Saturday and Sunday sessions. All sessions sold out in advance.

- **Victorian Teas and Etiquette Programs**

The Museum offers two types of tea programs: one for Girl Scouts, designed to meet badge requirements for relationship-building, behavior, and personal responsibility; and another designed for the general public to be conducted on a reservation basis. There were no private bookings of these events, a decrease from the previous year. The Museum has partnered with Calling Card Events to cater its tea programs.

- **Downton Abbey Programming**

The Museum offered a special Downton Abbey tour in January and February to emphasize the museum's connection with the popular television series. These tours proved to be extremely popular. The museum also rebranded its Victorian Teas as "Downton Abbey" Teas, with the tour included. A Downton Abbey Christmas Tea was offered in December.

- **Lectures**

Author and lecturer Joyce White gave a presentation and cooking demonstration on the history of Thanksgiving and traditional Thanksgiving foods on November 14. The program sold out.

- **Attics & Alleyways**

Each Saturday in May, Lee-Fendall House celebrated National Preservation Month with 3-hour walking tours of the four major historic sites in town and the neighborhoods that connect them. This program is conducted in partnership with the other historic house museums in Old Town. The series was successful and will be repeated in 2016.

- **Historic Garden Week in Virginia**

In April, Lee-Fendall House again participated in the Historic Garden Week in Virginia's annual open house tour.

- **Walking Tours**

The museum continued its walking tour of Lee family homes associated with the War of 1812 and developed new tours on Robert E. Lee and on the Civil War in Alexandria. The tours were offered in late summer and fall and were very successful. These tours will be offered again in the future.

- **Labor at Lee-Fendall**

In honor of Labor Day, the museum offered a special tour focused on the theme of labor history at Lee-Fendall House on the weekend of September 6-7. Attendance was poor again; the program will probably not be repeated.

- **Tall Ship L'Hermione and Lafayette Celebration**

Lee-Fendall participated in Alexandria's planning for the visit of the L'Hermione tall ship in June. The Lafayette in Alexandria open house program on May 31 brought 126 visitors to the museum that day. This program was free admission. Attendance was very good during the week of the L'Hermione visit. Lee-Fendall House had a temporary exhibit on display about the house's connections with France and Lafayette during this time.

- **Halloween Pumpkin Hunt**  
The museum expanded its Halloween Pumpkin Hunt by offering 4 time slots over October 23-24. One session was canceled due to poor presales. Other programs did well. New crafts and games were added this year, as well as prizes for costumes and pumpkin hunters. This program will be repeated for 2016.
- **Special Promotions**  
The museum participated in Smithsonian Museum Day promotion in September. This event offered free admission to visitors with a free pass coupon available online. Attendance was good.
- **Historic Alexandria Candlelight Tours**  
The Museum participated again in the Office of Historic Alexandria's Historic Candlelight Tours.
- **Special Exhibitions**
  - A. The exhibit "Their Fates Intertwined: The Lees of Alexandria in the War of 1812" continued in 2015.

#### **D. Social Media and Communications**

##### **A. Social Media**

The museum continued its social media efforts, primarily led by the Museum Assistant. We participate in eight social media outlets, with a total readership/ follow ship of over 2200 individuals.

##### **B. Website**

Dreamhost, which provides its shared-server space to nonprofits at no charge, continues to host the website and the staff emails. We are successfully using the website to post information on upcoming events, our events schedule, and as a portal for the public to purchase memberships, tickets to special events, and to make donations.

#### **E. Private Events**

- Wedding rentals continued to represent a strong stream of income for the Museum in 2015. There were eight weddings, one private reception, one private party, and one corporate party. The museum was also the site of three private photography shoots.
- For several years the Museum has hosted the Society of the Lees of Virginia for their annual board meeting. This one-day event brings together the Society's leadership for a day of business and fellowship. The Museum is proud to host this group's needs, and will continue to do so in 2015.

#### **F. Personnel**

##### **A. Executive Director**

John Christiansen continues in his capacity of Executive Director.

## **B. Departures**

Emily Cain left her position as Museum Assistant in June to pursue other opportunities. The vacancy was filled by Allison Kelly.

## **C. New Hires**

Allison Kelly was hired as a Museum Assistant in May. Michael Wallover was hired as Museum Associate in May and left in August; the vacancy has not been refilled.

## **D. Institutional Memberships**

The Museum reinstated or renewed several of its institutional memberships, which are crucial to keeping the Museum connected to its professional relationships. As of the end of 2015, Lee-Fendall House Museum & Garden is a member of the Alexandria Association, the Alexandria Convention & Visitors' Association, the American Association for State & Local History, the Historic House Museum Consortium of DC, the American Alliance of Museums, and the Virginia Association of Museums.

Although not formal institutional memberships, the Museum also participated in local and regional planning groups to unite efforts between similar sites and to bring attention to larger initiatives. These initiatives include the Tall Ship L'Hermione Commission and the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission.

## **G. Interns and Volunteers**

### **A. Volunteers**

Emily Cain and John Christiansen continued aggressively recruiting new volunteers in the summer by posting volunteer positions on several online volunteer matching services. Volunteers were sought to fill positions as docents, researchers, grounds workers, rental promoters and membership coordinators. This generated a large number of responses for garden and grounds volunteers, and the museum was able to eliminate its contracts for snow removal and garden maintenance. A volunteer Membership Coordinator, Roxane Fowler, was brought on in fall of 2015 and has contributed greatly in membership renewals and databases. Several Special Events Promotion volunteers were brought on board but were released. Research volunteers continue to discover valuable information about the objects in the museum's collection.

The number of volunteer docents declined during the summer when a number of long-time docent volunteers left to explore other volunteer experiences. The decline in docent volunteers has meant the museum has struggled to maintain its hours of operation with its limited staffing.

The training manual continues to be evaluated and improved for consistency and current information regarding historical background, visitor services and emergency procedures. This manual will continue to be updated as we reexamine changes to the interpretive plan and functions of the museum in the future.

The Junior League of Washington provided three volunteers for the year's special events. The annual agreement between JLW and the Museum, which provides us with many volunteers for events throughout the year, was renewed for 2015.

## **B. Volunteer Representative to the Board**

Dr. Dianne Murphy continued another year of service as Volunteer Representative to the Board of Directors. Dr. Murphy has served in this capacity with wisdom and enthusiasm.

## **H. Collections**

The museum was offered a large number of 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century items in May by Susan Thomas of Charlottesville. The Executive Director traveled to Charlottesville to examine the items, and ultimately accepted 42 pieces. They include:

- 1 diamond glass compote
- 1 eagle pressed glass comote
- 2 blue pressed glass vases
- pressed blue glass set (4 pieces)
- 2 pressed blue glass oil lamps
- 2 molded milk glass flower urn
- 1 molded milk glass salt cellar
- 2 molded milk glass covered dishes
- 1 pair molded milk glass figures, couple on horseback
- pair porcelain dogs
- set "Westward Ho" pattern pressed glass (6 pieces)
- 1 European box clock
- milk glass dresser set, Jenny Lind pattern (6 pieces)
- milk glass dresser set, floer pattern (3 pieces)
- 1 milk glass dish
- 2 milk glass candlesticks
- 1 cut glass
- 2 milk glass cut bowls

Many of the items had not been appraised, and should be for their insurance value.

## **I. Restoration and Maintenance**

### **A. East (Kitchen) Chimney**

The sloping east chimney remains in need of stabilization. The chimney was reanalyzed for stability and repair requirements in the fall. Prior estimates for repair remain accurate at \$30,000-\$35,000. Although the museum is passively soliciting donations for this project through its website, additional sources of funding remain to be identified.

#### **B. Garden**

Plans for providing additional bricked surfaces in the garden have not yet been implemented pending acquisition of additional project funding.

Montgomery Irrigation replaced the pump relay and the main water valve. Both components had failed, causing insufficient water pressure in the irrigation system and several wet spots on the lawn. This work has solved the problems that we have had with the system over the past 18 months. The relay pump cost was \$318, the valve replacement cost a little over \$1000.

After receiving complaints from Lee Mews concerning branches from our black walnut tree falling into their parking area, Bartlett Tree Service was contracted to remove additional dead limbs from the tree in July. The museum recovered a large supply of wood for fashioning gift shop items.

#### **C. Basement**

The sump pump in the basement failed in the spring during a period of severe rainfall, resulting in flooding in parts of that area. No museum materials were affected by the flooding. A new pump was installed.

#### **D. Roof**

Sometime over Memorial Day Weekend, a section of the ceiling plaster collapsed in the south attic storage room. Water and debris fell on several items of furniture stored in that area; however, none of these items were in good shape to begin with, so it was difficult to tell if they were damaged. High winds sheared off some shingles on the roof, allowing rainwater to saturate the lathe and plaster, causing the collapse. All damage was covered by insurance.

#### **E. Plumbing**

The bathroom sink on the second floor clogged in May. Kramer & Sons Plumbing repaired the clog in mid-June. Total cost was just under \$400.00.

#### **F. Porch**

Clogged drains on the porch roof in combination with heavy rainfall in the spring and summer caused buckling of the front porch flooring. Accumulation of water beneath the porch caused by improper drainage contributed to rot in the structure. Halse Construction began porch repairs in November. Wet weather and the holiday season delayed the project. As part of the repair, the front porch floor, columns, iron railing, and wood railing were replaced; the kitchen porch steps and floor were replaced; the



bronze historical plaque on Oronoco Street was reinstalled; and the window shutter slats on Oronoco Street were repaired. Total repair cost was \$15,337.84; of which \$13,120 will be covered by the grant from Historic Alexandria Foundation and a donation by Ed Horn.

## **J. Financial Report**

In 2015, the Museum continued to develop new programs, special events, fundraising campaigns, and membership drives to meet operational expenses and strengthen its financial position. The Easter Egg Hunt continued to be an outstanding success, bringing in nearly \$7,000 and the Halloween Pumpkin Hunt and new walking tours promise to be another successful revenue stream. The Museum benefited from generous donations from several private individuals and businesses, as well as continuing grants from the Society of Lees of Virginia.

The Museum participated in several online giving events, including Spring2ACTion and Giving Tuesday, which together raised over \$2000 in donations and matching funds.

2015 repeated the financial success begun the previous year. The Executive Director continued an outstanding job of minimizing expenses and came in \$2,500 under budget. Revenue from grants and events increased. The Lee-Fendall House Museum and garden had a surplus of over \$6,000 for the year; \$4500 of that surplus will be rolled over into the 2016 budget

## **K. Fund Raising**

### **A. Individual Donors**

Ms. Marian L. Adams	Mr. Bill Fendall	Ms. Renee O'Brien
Mr. & Mrs. James G. Aldige III	Ms. Anne Fortney	Ms. Katherine Omar
Mrs. Leslie Arail	Ms. Sharon Gajewski	Mrs. Faye M. Padgett
Mr. & Mrs. William Bassett	Ms. Mary Custis Glover	Judge & Mrs. Michael T. Paul
Mrs. Mary Ann Bier	Ms. Constance Graham	Mrs. Julie Perez
Mr. L. Fitzhugh Brown	Mrs. Virginia Gray	Ms. Laura Phelps
Ms. Angela Calanni	Mrs. Lis Fournier.	Mr. & Mrs. John Prevar
Mrs. Joyce Caldwell	Mr. David Halle, Jr	Mr. & Mrs. Paul Reagan
Mr. John Christiansen	Ms. Stacey Hawkins	Capt. & Mrs. Carter Refo
Mr. Leonard Christiansen	Mr. & Mrs. James Hayes	Ms. Patricia Refo
Mr. Leonardo Contardo	Ms. Tricia Holley	Ms. Lillian M. Remers
Capt. John S. Craighill	Mr. & Mrs. Ed Horn	Ms. Virginia V. Rocen
Dr. & Mrs. H. Talmage Day	Ms. Jean S. Hurley	Ms. Leslie Rosenbaum
		Dr. Patricia Sanders
		Mr. & Mrs. Gerhardt H. Schrage
		Mr. & Mrs. Larry Skog
		Mr. Jeremy Skog
Ms. Jane Debutts	Mr. & Mrs. John Hyland	
Mr. Robert Dugger & Ms. Joan Huffer	Mr. & Mrs. Dan Jackson	
Mr. & Mrs. Kent Duffy	Mrs. Kathleen Jeffers	Ms. Britt-Marie Stejeskal
Mr. & Mrs. H. Stewart Dunn, Jr	Ms. Valerie Keane	Mr. & Mrs. William F. Smith
Mr. William Elwood	Mr. James Kent	Mr. & Mrs. Jack Smith
Hon. Frank Fannon IV	Ms. Kathleen M. Kelly	Mr. Lyn Snodgrass
	Mr. & Mrs. James A. Kennedy	Ellen & Donald Stanton
Mrs. Lacy-Fehrenbach	Mr. & Mrs. Mark J. Kington	Mr. & Mrs. Douglas P. Stuart
Marosfalvy		
	Mr. Christopher G. Lee	Mr. John Urban
	Ms. Nancy Lieberman	Mr. Michael Wallover
	Ms. Laura Lieberman	Ms. Kathleen Waugh
	Ms. Susan Lonchar	Ms. Marianne Weitz
	Mr. & Mrs. Lonnie Marchant	Ms. Deanna Wilson
	Mr. & Mrs. Peter Mattheis	Dr. Robert K. Wineland
	Mr. J.L. Mallamo	Mr. & Mrs. Thomas A. Wolf
	Ms. Suzanne McDougal	Ms. Melissa Wong
	Dr. Dianne Murphy	Mrs. Peggy Youngblood
	Mrs. Kara Newbury	Dr. & Mrs. Robert Zapalac

**B. Business Donors**

Eugene Zimmerman Corporation

**C. Grants**

The Historic Alexandria Foundation  
The Junior League of Washington, D.C.  
The Society of the Lees of Virginia

**L. Board Membership**

**A.** At the February 2015 meeting of the Virginia Trust for Historic Preservation Board of Directors, the following officers were elected or reconfirmed:

President:	Dr. Patricia Sanders
Vice President:	Ed Horn
Treasurer:	Carter Refo
Secretary:	Ellen Stanton
Volunteer Representative:	Dr. Dianne Murphy

Other Board members who served were H. Talmage Day, Timothy Graham, David Heiden, and Kelly Jeffers. Margaret Reagan served as ex-officio member, representing the Society of the Lees of Virginia.

**B.** Laura Lieberman and Dianne Murphy were elected to the Board in February. Both have been active at Lee-Fendall House as volunteers. We are short of the fifteen voting members authorized in the By-Laws and are actively seeking new Board candidates.

**M. Outlook for 2015**

**A.** The outlook for 2015 is good. A strong schedule of events and programs is scheduled for the coming year, and the Museum is continuing to strengthen its partnerships with other cultural institutions in the area.

**B.** Attracting private rentals is a continuing concern, as a significant amount of the museum’s projected budget relies on expected rental income. Although total rentals remain about the same, wedding receptions continue to trend downward.

**C.** After a strong start, volunteer participation declined midway through the year. Docent staffing during the museum’s hours of operation has reemerged as a concern. Success in the recruitment of garden and maintenance volunteers has allowed the museum to eliminate these contracted services from its budget.

**D.** Renovation projects for 2015 include repairing the parking area’s brick pavers and the kitchen chimney repair. The museum plans to develop a capital campaign project to funds these repairs in 2016 in addition to seeking grant funding and donations.

- E.** The museum will continue to expand and improve its public programming for 2016 to alleviate potential loss of income from private rentals. If we keep up our income from grants and donations Lee-Fendall House Museum & Garden looks forward to another great year.