



Image courtesy of Sweet Tea Photography.

2012 Annual Report

Lee-Fendall House Museum & Garden

VIRGINIA TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

614 Oronoco Street

Alexandria, Virginia 22314

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I. 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 “Lighthorse 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 2012 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 2012. The Annual Report published by the Trust/Museum is available in hard copy and electronically on the Museum website, www.leefendallhouse.org. The report concludes with an assessment of 2012, 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.

II. 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.



The Downham Family enjoyed the garden so much that the address of the house was changed, so it could become the main entrance.

III. 2012 Events

A. Public

- **House Tours**

The Museum offered 40-minute public tours according to a regular schedule of Wednesday through Sunday. Unlike previous years, the Museum did not close to the public in January and February. We took this step so that our community could experience the site as a year-round resource and gathering place for the community. Although attendance in these two months was thin, it was comparable to similar sites for this low-visitation period of the year. Total visitorship figures come in close to 5000 people.

- **Easter Egg Hunt**

The 2012 13th Annual Easter Egg Hunt proved to be a larger, more popular event than ever. The Hunt was offered in five sessions over two days, with all sessions booked full. Walkups were turned away, and the decision to add a third day to the schedule in 2013 was made.

- **Wine Reception**

The Museum held three wine receptions during 2012. Although attendance fluctuated wildly between events, the receptions were popular, reaching several new audiences previously underdeveloped at the Museum, such as local singles groups. Jane Cahill of The Winery partnered with the Museum to bring greater visibility to these events, and we are grateful for her efforts and participation.



First and second-graders enjoy period crafts as a part of their Tea & Etiquette lesson.

- **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. Three school groups and two private groups booked these events, a significant increase over 2011.

- **Second Thursdays at Lee-Fendall**

In order to bring small-scale high-quality programming to the local community, the Museum developed a schedule of programs to be held on the second Thursday of each month. Programs included a living history workshop, book signing, volunteer fair, and other such events. Attendance was not robust, and the staff decided to table the programs for 2013 to reevaluate them.

- **Historic Garden Week in Virginia**

Lee-Fendall House participated in the Historic Garden Week in Virginia's annual open house tour. To enhance this experience, Jason Shellenhamer of Louis Berger Group conducted a walking tour of the garden to explain the 2010 summer excavation. His tour included artifacts recovered during the excavation, primary source documentation, and other visual aids. Friends of Alexandria Archaeology co-sponsored this event and it was well-attended.

- ***Spirits, Suffering & Society: Death in Civil War Alexandria***



Intern Kyle Dalton helped develop the program, and served as a Hospital Steward during the evening.

This reenactment was a new initiative for the museum in 2012. Inspired by Drew Gilpin Faust's book *This Republic of Suffering*, and the mansion's historic role as a hospital for the Union Army from 1862-65, the staff created a reenactment to explore death in Civil War Alexandria. With the assistance of the Victorian Society of Falls Church, several independent reenactors, and the History Club of Catholic University the event was popular, well-attended, and will be repeated in 2013. Additional web content for the event can be seen here:

http://www.leefendallhouse.org/?page_id=75

▪ **Special Exhibitions**

- A. The museum hosted “The Lees at Home: Treasures from Arlington House” in January as part of the celebration of Robert E. and Lighthorse Harry Lee’s birthdays. Twenty-seven items belonging to various members of the Lee family enlightened guests about the extended family and their participation in events at Lee-Fendall. The museum is grateful for the assistance and participation of the National Park Service--Arlington House.
- B. “A Thomas Nast Christmas” opened at the museum in November, just in time for the Thanksgiving holidays. With the assistance of Macculloch Hall Historical Museum in Morristown, New Jersey, the staff installed nine images created by political cartoonist Thomas Nast. The images were created during the Civil War, and use themes of holiday celebration to call attention to the toll of war on the homefront. The exhibit was very popular with audiences, and we hope to repeat it again.

IV. Social Media and Communications

A. Awards

In October, the Lee-Fendall House was presented the Bernard “Ben” Brenman Archaeology in Alexandria Award by City Council and the Alexandria Archaeological Commission. Cited for community stewardship of archaeological resources, the award marked the conclusion of the 2009-10 excavation of the Lee-Fendall House Garden. Erin Adams and Dr. Patricia Sanders, VTHP board president, were on hand to receive the award and citation from Mayor William Euille.

B. Social Media

In 2011, the staff began to establish a social media presence for the Museum. In 2012, we continued those efforts, primarily led by the Museum Assistant. We now participate in eight social media outlets, an increase of four over the previous year. Our total readership/followship exceeds 1300 individuals, an increase of nearly 1000 over 2011.

C. Newsletter

Beginning in January 2012, the museum changed its format for the newsletter, going from an occasional electronic publication, to a dedicated monthly format. Using an online template and distribution service, the museum has increased its readership and received positive feedback from readers and the local community. It has positively increased our reputation for an information and activity source. Readers can register for this free electronic newsletter by registering through several widgets located on our website

D. Website

With the invaluable assistance of Emily Rusch, the Museum transferred its web hosting services to Dreamhost. Dreamhost, which provides its shared-server space to nonprofits at no charge, hosts the website and the staff emails. Not only is this service more reliable and user-friendly than the previous website, it allows us to

disseminate information in real time and to link additional audiovisual and photographic content, leading to a more dynamic website.

New photographs for the website were secured by Emily Rusch through her contacts with the wedding community. Photographers Stephen Gosling, Jennifer Prophet, Kathryn Blank, VitaImages, Sweet Tea Photography and others provided the Museum with collections, grounds, and exterior mansion photographs that now populate the website, Facebook and the events blog, and are used with press releases and other advertising content. A selection of these images is used throughout this report.



A view of the North Parlor, courtesy of Stephen Gosling Photography.

V. Private Events

- Wedding rentals continued to represent a strong stream of income for the Museum in 2012. There were nine weddings and three other private events.
- The Museum offered its services as a gathering place for the National Alliance for Mental Illness-Northern VA Chapter's annual summer gala, free of charge.
- 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, and will continue to do so in 2013.

VI. Personnel

A. Staff Relationships and Activities

Relationships between the staff remain cordial and fruitful. Erin Adams and Emily Rusch completed their first full calendar year as Executive Director and Manager of Special Events, respectively. In addition to her duties as Executive Director, Ms. Adams also served the museum field through participation as a jurist in the American

Alliance of Museum's MUSE Awards. Ms. Rusch represented the museum to SESMA, and with several area special event vendors and photographers.

B. Departures

Philip Slattery, longtime Financial Officer, retired in August with seventeen years of service to Lee-Fendall House. Silvia Salazar-Estevez also resigned as housekeeper. Silvia remains the longest-employed member of the staff, with nearly twenty years of service. These two staff members leave with the heartfelt appreciation for their many years of service and dedication.

C. Museum Assistant

The Museum Assistant position was created to bring a part-time employee into the Museum that could assist the work of the Executive Director in the execution of a variety of museum functions. Lauren Maloy accepted the position and was responsible for managing media, advertising, private rentals, and museum housekeeping in addition to general administrative and visitor services assistance. The position provides for eighteen hours per week of assistance to the ED, which has allowed the museum to advance in many areas. Read more about these advancements in the 2012 Programs and Social Media and Communications sections.

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 2012, 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, and the Virginia Association of Museums. The Museum expresses its appreciation to the Historic House Museum Consortium of DC for its many efforts to maintain Lee-Fendall's membership despite a lapse in dues payment.

Although not formal institutional memberships, the Museum also participates in local and regional planning groups to unite efforts between similar sites and to bring attention to larger initiatives. These initiatives include the War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission, the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission, Special Events Sites Marketing Alliance (SESMA), and Antiques in Alexandria.

VII. Interns and Volunteers

A. Interns

Five interns served the Lee-Fendall House Museum during 2012. Together, their work represents more than 1500 hours of volunteer service to the Museum.

- Elishia Webster—George Washington University; Collections management and exhibition installation.
- Christina Regelski—George Mason University; Collections management, conservation project development, historic research.
- Mary LeMaster—Johns Hopkins University; Historic House Interpretation, including interpretive planning and docent training materials

- Kyle Dalton—Catholic University of America; Assisted with the design and implementation of the *Spirits, Suffering & Society: Death in Civil War Alexandria* reenactment
- Nicole Foronda—Catholic University of America; Assisted with educational programming, historic research, and spearheaded the design and implementation of period-correct Christmas decorations.

B. Docents

2011 closed with six trained docents on the volunteer roster. After issuing a challenge to the docents and advertising consistently for additional docent staff, the Museum is pleased to have added five additional tour guides. Two of these guides are previous volunteers who have rejoined the ranks, and three come from the Junior League of Washington. Our final count of volunteers for 2012 stands at twelve.

Docent training received a substantial improvement through the completion of a new training manual, completed in December 2012. The book was intended to bring more historic knowledge to the docents, to provide them with practical guidelines regarding visitor services and emergency procedures, and to create a reservoir of knowledge about Lee-Fendall House and Garden and the time periods and people covered in our tours. This manual also represents the beginning of changes to the interpretive plan and functions of the museum that will continue to be developed during 2013.

The Junior League of Washington provided some volunteers for the year's special events. The annual agreement between JLW and the Museum, which usually provides us with many more volunteers, was renewed for 2012 and 2013. Jennifer Walsh joined the museum ranks as a garden volunteer, assisting with smaller projects such as weeding, pruning, and removing the abundance of English ivy from many of the beds and trees.

For the first time in several years, the Museum awarded a Volunteer of the Year plaque to honor the extraordinary service of one person. Larry Herman received the award for 2012. Mr. Herman efficiently handles research requests, regularly provides house tours on Friday afternoons, and has been a generous financial donor as well. He is well worthy of this award.

C. 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. She has even taken on the additional role of unofficial volunteer coordinator, keeping contact information up-to-date, and maintaining the volunteer schedule. Her efforts have been appreciated by the staff and volunteers alike.

VIII. Restoration and Maintenance

A. Main Block Chimney

With the financial assistance of the Victorian Society of Falls Church, the Main Block chimney (the west chimney) received a thorough cleaning and inspection in February.

Victorian Chimney Services of Kensington, Maryland cleared the chimney of accumulated brick, mortar, animal nests, and general debris. They added a flexible stainless steel liner to replace the crumbling terra cotta liner and a chimney cap. They also painted the chimney, protecting the brick from additional water damage. The project was rendered urgent due to the improper ventilation of the furnace and the resulting stress placed on the heating system. At the same time, they provided a statement of need regarding the sloping east chimney, which will require additional exploration before execution.

B. Garden

Concluding a multi-year project to better understand the archaeological features and original design of the c. 1850 garden, landscape design firm Carvalho & Good finalized the design and delivery of construction documents to the Museum. Funding for this project came from the National Park Service's Save America's Treasures grant and was matched by grants from the Historic Alexandria Foundation. Although the design changes have not yet been implemented, the documents have been secured and await additional project funding.

C. Exterior House Painting



Prince Garden Contracting of Lanham, Maryland undertook the painting of the mansion's exterior in May. The North Washington Street side of the Main Block and the Oronoco Street ell were painted as well as the shutters. Funding was generously secured by the Virginia Trust for Historic Preservation board of directors.

D. First Floor Plaster

Andrew Wallace of Old Town Paint & Plaster was contracted to repair the plaster in the North Parlor. Despite extensive repairs in 2011, one section of the North Parlor wall continued to struggle with water damage. Funded by a grant from the Junior League of Washington, the plaster was finally and successfully repaired in June.

E. Hallway Flooring



Harry VanEvery of Alexandria generously donated his labor and materials to improve a small section of the main level flooring. Carpets laid in 1994 were removed, revealing two layers of historic linoleum beneath. The condition of the linoleum had declined past use or restoration, so the linoleum was also removed. The c.1915 flooring beneath was in excellent shape and made of American chestnut, an almost extinct species of wood today. Mr. VanEvery sanded and refinished these floors with historically appropriate materials then completed the work with new shoe moldings of chestnut and rebuilt the kitchen steps of oak. New wood thresholds were cut and placed in this section.

F. Fuel Conversion

After years of discussion, the Museum decided to proceed with the conversion of the heating system from oil to natural gas. Though an expensive upgrade, the environmental stewardship, energy efficiency, and improved financial burden to the Museum will reap substantial future benefits. Washington Gas generously donated the cost of the gas line installation. T.J. Fannon & Sons of Alexandria will install the new equipment. The work will be completed in early 2013 so the Museum can realize the benefits throughout the year.

IX. Financial Report

Throughout 2012, the Museum conducted programs, special events, fundraising campaigns, and membership drives to meet operational expenses and strengthen its financial position. As with previous years, these efforts have met with varied success. The board agreed in 2011 that once the Museum's total financial health reached an agreed-upon threshold that the Museum would cease operations until a long-term solution could be identified. By mid-2012, the Museum was at that threshold.

The annual appeal was sent out in November, earlier than in previous years. The message this time was simple: Lee-Fendall must have increased financial assistance to meet the final budget challenges of 2012 or face permanent closure. The Museum received assistance in spreading this message from the Alexandria Historical Society and other organizations, including area media. The appeal was successful to meet the challenges of 2012, although there was a small deficit. The increased attention to the Museum's situation, it is believed, will draw support and resources to the Museum.

X. Fund Raising

A. Individual Donors

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Abell	Mr. Larry Herman	Capt. & Mrs. Carter Refo
Ms. Lois Ancona	Ms. Jeri Hesson	Ms. Patricia L. Refo
Mrs. John H. Ariail	Ms. Betty Corzon Hill	Anne Fortney & Richard Riddell
Mr. & Mrs. William Bassett	Mr. & Mrs. Ed Horn	Mr. & Mrs. Robert W. Robinson
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Bovey	Ms. Jean S. Hurley	Mrs. Emily D. Rusch
Mr. & Mrs. Chip Buckley	Mr. & Mrs. John Hyland	Dr. Patricia Sanders
Hon. & Mrs. Robert Calhoun	Mr. & Mrs. Robert M. Jenkins	Mr. & Mrs. Gerhardt H. Schrage
Capt. John S. Craighill	Mr. & Mrs. Joe Johnson	Mr. & Mrs. John Siegmund
Dr. & Mrs. H. Talmage Day	Mr. & Mrs. Joseph F. Johnston, Jr.	Mr. & Mrs. William F. Smith
Mr. & Mrs. Robert H. Dugger	Mr. & Mrs. James A. Kennedy	Dr. & Mrs. Daniel Smith
Mr. & Mrs. H. Stewart Dunn, Jr.	Mr. Christopher G. Lee	Mr. Phillip W. Slattery
Mr. & Mrs. Samuel Ellsworth	Mr. & Mrs. Peter Mattheis	Mr. & Mrs. Robert Stalder
Hon. Frank Fannon	Amy & Jeff Millican	Ellen & Donald Stanton
Mrs. M. Susan Farr	Mr. & Mrs. Kim Morehouse	Ms. Britt-Marie Stejskal
Ms. Betty Farrell	Mr. & Mrs. Mark Mueller	Mr. & Mrs. Douglas P. Stuart
Mrs. Martha S. Feldkamp	Mr. & Mrs. Richard Muller	Ms. Michelle Triantos
Mr. Bill Fendall	Dr. Dianne Murphy	Mr. & Mrs. Ramon vonDrehle
Mr. & Mrs. Timothy Graham	Ms. Caroline H. Norman	Ms. Leslie J. Wilder
Mr. David Halle, Jr.	Mrs. Faye M. Padgett	Mr. & Mrs. Richard Wilder
Ms. Nancy Hamilton	Judge & Mrs. Michael T. Paul	Mr. & Mrs. Thomas A. Wolf
Mr. & Mrs. David Heiden	Ms. Jean Ponton	Mr. & Mrs. Hendrik R. Woods
Mr. & Mrs. James D. Heinzen	Mr. & Mrs. Gant Redmon	Dr. & Mrs. Robert Zapalac

B. Business Donors

Old Town Paint & Plaster
Rent-All Center

C. Grants

TechSoup (Microsoft, Norton, Adobe products)
The Alexandria Association
The Camp-Younts Foundation
The Historic Alexandria Foundation
The Junior League of Washington
The Marilyn S. Moll Trust
The Society of the Lees of Virginia
The Victorian Society of Falls Church

XI. Board Membership

A. At the January 2012 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, Robert Stalder, Rebecca Thorsen, and Hendrik Woods. Thomas Wolf serves as an ex-officio member, representing the Society of the Lees of Virginia.

- B. During the year Amy Millican and Stephanie Morris resigned due to work and family responsibilities. Hendrik Woods and Rebecca Thorsen joined the Board, to bring the group to a total of twelve voting members. We are short of the fifteen voting members authorized in the By-Laws and are actively seeking new Board candidates.

XII. Outlook for 2013

- A. The outlook for 2013 is good. The Executive Director is actively scheduling events and programs. She has instituted a tracking system that should help us identify which events are money makers and which are not. Other aspects of operations are being streamlined that will generate reliable, consistent data in all areas of museum operations.
- B. The staff has issued a challenge to the volunteers to recruit new corps members. Five new garden volunteers have stepped forward, and two docents are already in training. For the museum to fulfill its publicly advertised schedule, it must offer 108 tours per month. The need for additional volunteers cannot be understated.
- C. Although the Museum has offered a selection of Museum Shop merchandise for sale from time to time, it has never been a focused part of our revenue stream. For 2013, a permanent space is going to be set aside for the Shop, and it will be outfitted and staffed as such. The center of operations in the Museum is going to be shifted to this space.
- D. Renovation projects for 2013 include completion of the fuel conversion, window and gutter cleaning and repair, the rebuilding of two porches, and replacement of the telephone system.
- E. Private Rentals are anticipated to show a strong return for 2013, with nine events on the calendar before the end of December 2012. Adjustments made to the rental contracts and rate schedule are expected to drive additional business for 2013. If we keep up our income from grants and donations Lee-Fendall House Museum & Garden looks forward to a great year.



Image courtesy of Sweet Tea Photography