The Garden through the Gate: A Victorian Vision

When the Lee-Fendall House opened its doors as a museum back in 1974, it was a gleaming memorial to Revolutionary War hero Light-Horse Harry Lee. The house opened during an exciting time in Alexandria when the preservation of historic sites was at the forefront of people's minds as the country approached its bicentennial. Extensive work had gone into transforming the house from its mid-twentieth century styling back to its original state as a Federal-period home. This initial transition had sadly overlooked the needs of the home's garden—a half-acre lot off the back of the house that had sat untouched for years. Shortly after the museum's opening, Elizabeth Kerr, a local garden enthusiast, took it upon herself to remedy this.

Kerr was out walking through Old Town one day when the unkempt fenced lot at Lee-Fendall House caught her attention. As civic chairman of the Garden Club of Alexandria, she was struck by the state of the space and determined to repurpose it as a Victorian-era garden. She assembled a consortium of 17 local garden clubs who committed to maintaining the garden. They orchestrated a variety of measures to raise money for these efforts, from charging for tours around their personal gardens to selling bricks for construction of the garden wall for $1. When the restoration was complete, the garden clubs had raised $75,000 to improve the garden.

With these funds, the consortium decided to construct a Victorian pleasure-garden much like the one that was created during the 1850 renovation of the home. This plan included the installation of brick walkways, beds of heritage roses, numerous boxwoods, garden benches, and much more. In addition, the project reconstructed the home's privy on its original location. By its completion ten years later, the plan had drastically elevated the space and was successful in establishing the garden as a beautiful refuge from the hustle and bustle of the city.

Today, the garden continues to serve as a lush space for visitors to enjoy. Step through the garden gate and you can see much of Kerr's work still preserved in its landscaping. The quaint brick pathways neatly lined with plump boxwoods run along the garden's edge and provide a serene setting for a midday stroll. As the decades have passed a lot has changed at the museum, but the beauty of the garden is a lasting treasure. The energy of the early garden club volunteers has been replaced by today's museum volunteers who enjoy maintaining the garden and who now serve as the stewards of Kerr's vision.

Docent Day Out!

The Lee-Fendall House docents enjoy exploring and learning more about other historic sites. This past spring docents took a trip to the Ben Lomond Historic Site in Manassas, VA, to see how the site interprets its history as a Civil War hospital. The trip was a great educational experience for the whole team!

The Lee-Fendall House offers many different types of volunteer roles from giving house tours to conducting collection research to tending to the museum's garden.

Interested in volunteering? Email: manager@leefendallhouse.org

Keep up with what's happening at Lee-Fendall House! Follow us on:

Lee-Fendall House Museum & Garden
@leefendallhouse
@leefendallhousemuseum

Summer 2018
Lee-Fendall House Museum & Garden
614 Oronoco St.
Alexandria, VA 22305
703-548-1789
contact@leefendallhouse.org
www.leefendallhouse.org

Museum Hours:
Wed-Sat: 10am - 4pm
Sun: 1 - 4pm
Guided tours offered on the hour.
Self-guided tours also available.

Did you know that you can host special events, parties, and meetings at the Lee-Fendall House?
Visit leefendallhouse.org for rental details!
An Honor to Celebrate!

The National Trust for Historic Preservation works tirelessly all across the country to help preserve sites of historical significance. In an effort to recognize many of the individuals contributing to this work, the Trust launched a new initiative this past April – a list of 40 Under 40: People Saving Places. This list highlights exceptional young professionals working at or in collaboration with historic sites who are making great strides in evolving and expanding the scope of what historic preservation entails. Their groundbreaking work enhances the value and meaning of historic sites within their communities and helps people appreciate the role these sites play in our country’s historical narrative. We are very proud to announce that Amanda Roper, our Assistant Manager at the Lee-Fendall House, was honored on this list.

Amanda came to the Lee-Fendall House in April 2017 after working at the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC, where she helped the museum during its opening. Upon coming to the Lee-Fendall House, she saw a great opportunity to develop and revitalize the house’s public programming. After only a year in her role, Amanda has managed to do just that. She has taken her personal passion for sharing underrepresented stories and used it to create programs such as Under the Same Roof: Enslaved and Free Servants at the Lee-Fendall House. This tour brings to life the previously untold stories of the enslaved and free domestic servants working in the house from 1785-1969. On the tour, visitors are encouraged to engage with each other and reflect on how America remembers and commemorates its past. In addition to promoting community dialogue, this highly-acclaimed tour has helped to attract a more diverse audience to the museum.

Amanda’s focus on innovative programming and public engagement are invaluable to the success of the museum. Her work is inspired by her belief in the relevance of history and its power to shape us as individuals and as a nation. She is truly an asset to the Lee-Fendall House and is more than deserving of this honor. Congratulations, Amanda!

Bring on the Sunshine!

Lee-Fendall House volunteers have spent the last two months busy at work sprucing-up and refreshing the house’s garden. Each week volunteers have been pruning shrubbery, repairing brickwork, and planting new flowers and bushes. In April, the museum also welcomed local green thumbs for a garden work day, which further helped efforts to groom the garden.

One of the focal points of the garden work was clearing-out and adding new flowers to the large bed that runs parallel to the house. Volunteers planted a wide variety of plants including lilies, peonies, bleeding heart, primroses, and Sweet William—among others. Additionally, azaleas and lavender plants were added around the bases of trees along the garden edge. Plants were carefully chosen to help ensure multi-seasonal color, so we have a beautiful garden to look forward to through the fall!

All plants added to the garden have been graciously donated by volunteers. Compost and mulch were donated by the Alexandria nursery Greenstreet Gardens. Their generous donation will help keep the new plants and flowers healthy and growing all season long. With the rainstorms tapering off, we are looking forward to some sunshine to help our plants blossom!

Visit the garden through the gate on N. Washington Street during regular museum hours.
It’s back! Lee-Fendall House’s much-anticipated annual speakeasy fundraiser returns for the third year — and it’s better than ever!

From our front-row seat on North Washington Street in Old Town Alexandria, the Lee-Fendall House Museum has witnessed three centuries of Alexandria and national history. But all those years of a front-row seat have taken their toll. Both the passage of time and the rumble of constant traffic have left the house’s historic foundations in distress and at risk.

In 2016, Lee-Fendall House hosted its first annual gala fundraiser. In choosing a theme for the event, staff chose to mark the centennial anniversary of statewide Prohibition in Virginia, which had a profound impact on the Downham family who then called the Lee-Fendall House home. The Downhams were, at the time, involved in the liquor trade — and Prohibition would significantly alter their lives and fortunes.

The event started out with the intention of marking a single milestone anniversary, but it was too much fun celebrating this lesser-known period of Alexandria’s past to limit it to just one year! Accordingly, a speakeasy theme has continued each year as we work to bring the community together to support preservation needs at the house — and we’re excited to do it again this fall!

On Saturday, September 22nd, we invite you to join us for Sips & Secrets: A Speakeasy Night, to help the museum raise the funds needed to restore the foundation and commemorate the Lee-Fendall House’s Prohibition-era history.

- Enjoy 1920s-style drinks as we raise a glass to the prominent liquor-dealing Downham family of pre-Prohibition Alexandria.
- Dance to some great jazz and ragtime music, and brush up on your skills to enter our Charleston contest.
- Show up in your best flapper or mobster style and win a prize for the best 1920s costume.
- And more – keep an eye on our social media pages as plans take shape!

Tickets are available at our Eventbrite page – search for Lee-Fendall House or visit our website or Facebook page for the link. General admission tickets are $60 and include three drink tickets, heavy hors d’oeuvres and dessert, and all the speakeasy fun you can handle! New this year is a general admission price of $35 for young professionals (ages 21-30; all guests must be 21 years or older to attend).

Interested in an insider’s look at Lee-Fendall’s Prohibition past? Join us at 6:30 PM for a VIP pre-reception, including an exclusive liquor-tasting and a tour of the house that focuses on how Prohibition changed the lives of the Downham family and other Alexandrians. VIP tickets are $85, and those holding current Lee-Fendall House Museum & Garden memberships may attend as VIPs for the price of general admission.

There are also opportunities available to sponsor the overall event with a cash donation, or to contribute to our silent auction highlighting local businesses and organizations. For more details or to sponsor, please contact Megan Ritter, event chairperson, at MRitter1776@gmail.com or 410-259-9273.

We hope to see you on September 22nd wearing your speakeasy best!
Welcome to Our Summer Interns!

Esther Bouquet

Esther is a rising senior at the College of William and Mary majoring in government. She grew up immersed in the rich history of Alexandria and was drawn to Lee-Fendall by the opportunity to explore American history outside the conventional classroom setting. Previously, Esther has volunteered with the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History where she helped with children's programming. While at Lee-Fendall, Esther will work to develop hands-on educational programs designed to connect young children with history. In her spare time, Esther likes to run the Mount Vernon Trail and enjoy a hygge lifestyle.

Courtney Hawkins

A Texas native, Courtney moved to Virginia to pursue a graduate degree in museum studies at The George Washington University. Her research focuses on collections management and brings together her enjoyment of both organizing and creative decision-making. Along with her collections experience, she brings to Lee-Fendall a deep-rooted love of art and history, as well as a great interest in the conservation and preservation of historic objects. During her internship, she will help research and organize the museum's collections. Outside of working and studying, she enjoys yoga, watching movies, painting, and exploring the world of art crime.

It is our great pleasure to welcome Esther and Courtney to the Lee-Fendall House team!

Trivia Nights at Historic Sites

Learn more about this summer’s partnership between Lee-Fendall House and Carlyle House in our Q&A with Lee-Fendall House Assistant Manager, Amanda Roper.

What inspired this collaboration between Lee-Fendall House and Carlyle House?

As two of the most historic houses in Alexandria, it made a lot of sense to join forces. The mission of both of our sites is to preserve and interpret the history of this city and its inhabitants. The Carlyle House focuses on the Colonial and Revolutionary history of the city, and the Lee-Fendall House sort of picks up the story where Carlyle House leaves off and carries it into the twentieth century. Both houses have the distinction of being converted into Union hospitals during the Civil War and there are a surprising number of other historical connections between the two homes.

How did you all decide on hosting trivia nights?

Trivia nights are a fun way to bring people together and it was an excuse for museum staff to tap into their collective knowledge to create trivia questions on a range of topics related to culture and history.

What can attendees expect a typical trivia night to look like?

Each trivia night will have a different theme ranging from pop-culture to history. The setting will be in the beautiful Lee-Fendall House garden. There will be prizes for the winners. Snacks and alcoholic beverages will also be available! Tune into social media a week before each trivia night for hints about what the theme will be.

Can we expect more events like this between the two sites in the future?

You can definitely expect more exciting collaborative events in the future, including special tours that connect the histories of the two houses.

What are the overall goals of creating this type of collaborative event?

The goal of our collaborative events is to connect new audiences with our sites and their histories as well as foster a new generation of supporters. Both of our museums were opened in the 1970s when there was an increasing interest in American history due to the bicentennial. Much of that support has waned in recent years. Our goal is to be viewed as places of relevance in Alexandria, because learning about our past is so important to understanding ourselves as individuals and as a community.
Celebrate your Wedding!

**House Events**
The Lee-Fendall House offers a unique and elegant space for your small celebration. Let the beautiful entrance hall of the house serve as the perfect setting for your intimate ceremony. Indoor ceremonies can accommodate 25 seated guests or 50 standing guests.

**Garden Events**
The Lee-Fendall House garden is our most popular venue and permits wide latitude for ceremonies, dining, and entertainment. The garden provides a lush event setting with ample space for up to 150 guests. Choose from multiple garden focal points as the backdrop for your ceremony.

---

**Did you know that the Lee-Fendall House Museum is a 501(c)(3) non-profit?**

The Lee-Fendall House relies on donations from supporters like you in order to provide educational and public programming to our community. To learn more about our mission and how to contribute or make a gift, please visit www.leefendallhouse.org.