

# 2018 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 2018 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 2018. 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 2018, 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 Virginia Trust for Historic Preservation adopted a new mission statement for the Lee-Fendall House Museum & Garden on November 8, 2018:

*The Lee-Fendall House Museum & Garden interprets American history through the experiences of those who lived and worked on the property from 1785 to 1969. As an educational center, the museum preserves its historic resources to promote community engagement about the relevance of the past to our present.*

## **C. 2018 Educational Programs**

### **▪ House Tours**

The Museum offered 40-minute public tours according to a regular hourly Wednesday through Sunday schedule. A self-guided tour brochure was offered to visitors who did not wish to take a guided tour. Total visitor-ship figures were 5046 people at our tours, special events, and rentals, a 8.75% increase from the prior year. The majority of museum admissions continued to come from tours and programs. Three school groups and one private group toured the museum in fall, an increase over past years.

### **▪ Thematic House Tours**

The museum offered four thematic tours of the Lee-Fendall House in 2018.

- *“Under the Same Roof: Enslaved and Free Servants at the Lee-Fendall House”*: This tour explores the lives of enslaved and free African Americans who lived and worked in the house both before and after the Civil War. The program was offered Saturday afternoons on January 13,

February 24, May 26, and November 24. These tours have garnered much interest and frequently reach capacity.

- “*Stories in the Architecture*”: This tour explored the history of the Lee-Fendall House through changes in its architecture. Tours were offered Saturday afternoons on January 27 and March 10.
- “*Home Makeover: 1850s Edition*”: This tour examined the stylistic changes and technological improvements made to the Lee-Fendall House during its 1850s renovation by the de Casenove family. Tours were offered Saturday afternoons on June 23 and June 28.
- “*Grief and Ghosts*”: The museum offered a Halloween themed “Ghosts & Grief Tour” the evenings of October 26-28. This program paired information on Victorian mourning practices with ghost stories about the Lee-Fendall House. Over 140 people attended the programs, double the attendance of the previous year.

#### ▪ **Lectures**

Two food history lectures by historian Joyce White were offered at the museum in 2018.

- “Chocolate Through Time,” April 14.
- “Thanksgiving 1621 to the Present,” November 10.

#### ▪ **Attics & Alleys**

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 Carlyle House and the Office of Historic Alexandria. The series will be repeated in 2019.

#### ▪ **Walking Tours**

The museum continued its existing walking tour programs and introduced two new tours.

- “*Beyond the Battlefield*”: This walking tour of Civil War Alexandria was offered Saturday mornings on March 24, July 28, September 8, and October 20.
- “*The General’s Tour*”: This tour highlights sites associated with the life of Robert E. Lee in Alexandria. It was offered Saturday mornings on June 9, August 11, September 22, and November 10.
- “*The War of 1812 in Alexandria*”: First developed for the bicentennial of the war in 2014, this tour highlighted locations and events in Old Town related to the War of 1812. It was offered Saturday mornings on July 14 and August 25.
- “*Prohibition in Alexandria*”: A new walking tour for 2018 featuring locations related to Prohibition Era in Alexandria debuted on October 13.

#### ▪ **Student Programs**

Two new student programs were introduced in 2018.

- *Summer Stories*  
Each Thursday morning from June 21 through August 9, the museum offered reading programs for pre-school children that included stories,

activities, and crafts based on a changing weekly theme. Attendance grew over the course of the series, with the final sessions sold out.

- *Homeschool Day*  
The museum coordinated with the Home Educators Association of Virginia to provide interactive activity stations and tours for homeschool students and their families on September 28. Nearly 80 people attended the program.
- **A Victorian Christmas**  
This family program emphasizing Victorian inspired traditions, crafts, refreshments, and pictures with Santa Claus was offered on December 15.
- **Historic Alexandria Candlelight Tours**  
The Museum participated again in the Office of Historic Alexandria's Historic Candlelight Tours on December 8. Despite excellent weather, visitor turnout was low compared to previous years, but gift shop sales performed well.
- **Special Exhibitions**
  - A. The exhibit "John L. Lewis: Public Figure, Private Man" continued for 2018.
  - B. A small, temporary exhibit opened on September 22 at the VIP reception for Sips & Secrets entitled "Beaded Glamour: Accessorizing in the 1920s." It featured beaded purses and jewelry from the collection and was on display in the small exhibit room through November 21.
  - C. A temporary exhibit, "The Golden Age of Toys: 1870-1920" highlighting Victorian toys from our collection was on display on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor for the holiday season.

#### **D. 2018 Public Programs**

- **Easter Egg Hunt**  
The 2018 Annual Easter Egg Hunt continued with a three-day schedule on March 30 – April 1 with a total of six sessions over the weekend. Attendance continued to be full for all sessions. All sessions sold out in advance. Due to inclement weather on Friday afternoon, refunds were offered to any purchasers of advance tickets who chose not to attend.
- **Historic Garden Week in Virginia**  
On April 28, Lee-Fendall House again participated in the Historic Garden Week in Virginia's annual open house tour.
- **Royal Wedding Garden Party**  
The museum hosted a reception for the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle with traditional British food & drinks, lawn games, and contests on May 19. This program proved very popular and quickly sold out.
- **Trivia Nights at Historic Sites**  
The Lee-Fendall House partnered with Carlyle House Historic Park to offer a trivia night series with a cash bar in the museum garden Friday evenings bi-weekly from June 15 through August 24. The majority of programs sold out, and the number of available tickets was increased over the course of the program.

- **Sips & Secrets**

The museum hosted a Prohibition themed fundraising event for the repair of the museum's foundation and exterior brickwork on September 2s. The event combined a specialty tour of the house with cocktails, food, music, and a silent auction. This event generated \$10,011.89 for basement repair.

- **Halloween Pumpkin Hunt**

The museum held its Pumpkin Hunt again on October 27. Due to the weather the day of the Pumpkin Hunt refunds were offered to any purchasers of advance tickets who chose not to attend. Enough attendees appeared to cover our expenses for the program with a small profit.

## **E. Social Media and Communications**

### **A. Social Media**

The museum continued its social media efforts. The Assistant Manager of Operations and several Board members were particularly active in effectively using this platform to promote our programming and engage with past, current, and potential visitors. We participate in four social media outlets, with a total readership/ follower count of over 4500 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 and to make donations. The museum continued using Eventbrite as its online ticket sales platform.

## **F. Private Events**

Rentals represent an important stream of income for the Museum in 2018 but continue to fall short of expectations. There were 12 rentals booked for 2018: 2 wedding receptions, 3 wedding ceremonies, 1 meeting, 1 funeral, 1 birthday party, 1 baby shower, 1 photography session, 1 promotion ceremony, and 1 ghost hunt.

## **G. Gift Shop**

The gift shop remained in the front hall to increase visibility and sales. Sales were four times higher than recent years thanks to strong sales of the new Lee-Fendall House Christmas ornaments commissioned by the Office of Historic Alexandria and Lee commemorative woodwork items crafted and donated by Carter Refo.

## **H. Personnel**

John Christiansen continues in his capacity of Executive Director. Amanda Roper continued as Assistant Manager of Operations.

## **I. Interns and Volunteers**

### **A. Volunteers**

Amanda Roper and John Christiansen continued aggressively recruiting new volunteers by posting volunteer positions on several online volunteer matching services. Volunteers were sought to fill positions as docents, researchers, and grounds workers. This generated a large number of responses for garden and grounds volunteers, particularly from people needing community service hours, and the museum was able to continue to operate without contracting with commercial vendors for snow removal and garden maintenance. Research volunteers continue to discover valuable information about the objects in the museum's collection. Volunteer docent tour guides were scheduled for nearly every day the museum was open to the public.

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 2018. The JLW also provided us with additional volunteers for programs such as Sips & Secrets, the Easter Egg Hunt, Halloween Pumpkin Hunt, and Candlelight Tour.

### **B. Interns**

The Lee-Fendall House welcomed three interns for 2018, two for the summer and one for the fall.

Spring Education Intern, Esther Bouquet, developed the early childhood "Summer Stories" programs offered every Thursday morning throughout the summer.

Spring Collections Management Intern, Courtney Hawkins worked to polish, rehouse, photograph and catalogue the silver collection. She also assisted with projects in the archives.

Fall Education Intern Mackenzie Breeland developed a field trip for local 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders at the focusing on the Civil War and Reconstruction. She also filled in as a tour guide, assisted with the Halloween Pumpkin Hunt in October, and helped develop and implement the museum's Homeschool Day program on September 28. The stipend for this internship was covered by a grant from the Society of the Lees of Virginia.

## **J. 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 2018, 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 included Alexandria Museums Consortium and the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission.

## **K. Restoration and Maintenance**

The museum's Facilities Committee maintained a prioritized list of facilities projects to guide future restoration efforts and funding.

### **A. Garden**

The garden was greatly improved over 2018. The old herb garden area was been cleaned out and replanted, the flower beds along the privy were cleaned out and replanted, the dead honeysuckle tree was cut down and removed, the brush and trees along the garden wall were cleared out, and new azaleas were planted. The majority of this work was done entirely by volunteers. Work days were scheduled on June 9 and June 30 and led by Amanda Roper, and a regular work group met on Wednesday mornings in the spring. Volunteers Chris Stanek and Roger Monthey conceptualized the new look, and both Roger and Board member Carter Refo, and Board member Megan Ritter donated new plants, mulch, tools, and other items. Special recognition is due to Roger Monthey, who has donated many work hours as well as material costs for this project. Board member Ed Horn also donated a great deal of time and materials repairing and painting the garden fence around the privy and the Oronoco Street gate and clearing out the exterior garden beds in the same area.

### **B. Asbestos Encapsulation**

Encapsulation of exposed asbestos in the Lee-Fendall House basement was performed by Yong Environmental on March 1. Subsequent environmental testing confirmed that exposed asbestos was no longer present in the basement.

### **C. Garden Light**

In 2017, the Yacht Haven Garden Club of Alexandria donated \$1300.00 for the installation of a new lamp post in the northeast corner of the garden to provide extra illumination for caterers and other vendors during evening rentals. A new electrical outlet would also be included. Required approval from Alexandria's Board of Architectural Review was sought and granted in a public hearing on September 5. Final installation was conducted in December by Zimmermann Electrical.



#### **D. Pest Control**

The museum continued its contract with Pro-Tech in June to provide pest control management for rodents and termites.

#### **E. Foundation Repair and Stabilization**

Repair and stabilization of the Lee-Fendall House's foundation, including brick, stone, and mortar inside and outside of the building was conducted by Vaughan Restoration Masonry in November.

#### **L. Strategic Planning**

The Board of the Virginia Trust for Historic Preservation held a strategic planning session on August 4 to assess itself and the Lee-Fendall House Museum & Garden. Planning and preparation for the session began in May with museum staff and an ad hoc action committee.

Several issues were identified during the strategic planning session for action by the Board, including revision of the museum's mission statement, creation and revision of the Board's governing documents and guidelines, and an increased focus on fundraising. As a result, a new mission statement was drafted by a work committee and approved by the full Board on November 8. Efforts on strengthening governing documents and on fundraising are continuing into 2019.

#### **M. Financial Report**

In 2018, the Museum continued to develop new programs, special events, fundraising campaigns, and membership drives. The Easter Egg Hunt continued to be an outstanding success, and the Halloween Pumpkin Hunt, new house and walking tours, and other programs are also important revenue streams. The Museum benefited from generous donations from several private individuals and businesses in three fundraising campaigns, as well as continuing grants from the Society of Lees of Virginia, the Junior League of Washington, DC, and the Historic Alexandria Foundation. However, the museum faces significant challenges in increasing revenue to match increased expenses.

The Board's "Sips & Secrets" fundraiser in September was a great success in generating \$10,011.89 for foundation stabilization and repair. The Board was able to get a number of items donated, including food from Paris Catering, Firehook Bakery & Coffee Shop, and Rocklands Barbecue & Grilling Company, as well as auction items from many local businesses. In addition \$1750.00 in corporate sponsorships were brought in. This event will be repeated for 2019.

The Museum participated in several online giving events, including Spring2ACTion and Giving Tuesday. Spring2ACTion focused on raising funds for foundation masonry repair and raised \$7860.71, the most successful Spring2ACTion campaign

the museum has had to this date. Giving Tuesday was targeted at funding educational materials and brought in \$1795.00.

Grants included a \$1000.00 Opportunity Grant from the Junior League of Washington, DC which was used to purchase pop-up tents for garden programs, a baby changing station for the restroom, and program supplies, The Society of Lees of Virginia contributed a \$10,000.00 unrestricted grant, and \$1000.00 for a stipend for a fall education intern. The Historic Alexandria Foundation awarded a \$5000.00 grant towards repointing and repair of foundation masonry.

Revenue was \$50,000 below expenses for 2018. Rentals brought in \$14,697.23 against an expected \$35,800. Also, despite great success in targeted fundraising for the foundation work, revenue from general contributions, memberships, and sponsorships was expected to be \$38,000; \$8389.54 was realized. Smaller contributing actors were weather disruptions for the Halloween Pumpkin Hunt and one day of the Easter Egg Hunt.

Reflecting stock market volatility, the Bill Fendall Endowment Fund value decreased \$144,908.03. For the 2018 budget, a total of \$82,700 was transferred from the VTHP Reserve/Bill Fendall Endowment Funds to the Operating Account.

The Lee-Fendall House faces significant challenges in 2019 in increasing memberships and attracting donor support through unrestricted contributions and grant funding tied to operational expenses.

## **N. Fund Raising**

### **A. Individual Donors**

Anonymous  
Scott Adams  
Katie Attiken  
Nancy & David Barbour  
William Bassett  
Timothy Beaty  
Gregory Beller  
Joseph Berger  
Ted Borek  
Carol M. Bottoms  
Wayne Braeuer  
Patricia Braun  
Sherry Browne  
Angela Calanni  
Robert Calhoun  
John Christiansen  
Leonard Christiansen  
Benjamin Cox  
Chris Cox  
Captain John Craighill  
Tal & Barbara Day  
Frank Fuller, Jr  
Mary Custis Glover  
Willard & Trish Grant  
Roger Grayson  
Jill Gribbin  
Terri Hauser  
Dennis Hensley  
Ed & Missy Horn  
Aarlen Hunt  
Mathann Jackson  
Kimberly Jeffers  
Joseph F. Johnston, Jr.  
Robin Jordan  
Randall Just  
Marie Karl  
Valerie Keane & John Urban  
Allison Kelley  
Kathleen Kelly  
James Kent  
Mary Kerr  
Mary Christina Kohn  
Francois Krodel  
Laura Lieberman  
Suzanne Lipcaman

Linda Lovell  
Melissa McMahon  
Anita Mann  
Kirsten Massey  
Peter Mattheis  
Roger & Wanda Monthey  
Matthew Moore  
Dr. Dianne Murphy  
Gayle Murphy  
Kim Norberg  
Kathleen Oehler  
The Honorable Michael & Karen Paul  
Jane Perley  
Melissa Petersen  
Ned Phillips  
Mr. & Mrs. John Prevar  
Paul & Margaret Reagan  
Carter Refo  
Gregory Regelski  
Lillian M. Remers  
Richard Riddell & Anne Fortney  
Megan Ritter  
Jeannine Rock  
Amanda Roper  
Alexandra Rossetti  
Gail Rothrock  
Dr. Patricia Sanders  
Lindsey Schmidt  
Nell Seliga  
Mr. & Mrs. John Siegmund  
Jeremy Skog  
Judith Skog  
Danny & Nancy Smith  
Janet Smith  
Lyn Snodgrass  
Britt-Marie Stejskal  
Kimberley Toumey  
Robin Utz  
Rawley Vaughan  
Meghan White  
Timothy White  
Deanna Wilson  
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Wolf  
Mr. & Mrs. Mike Yeager  
The Victorian Society at Falls Church

**B. Business Donors**

Alexandria Film Festival  
Altria Client Services LLC  
AR Workshop Alexandria  
Babs Beckwith, McEneaney Associates  
Bluemont Vineyards  
Bittersweet Catering  
Carlyle House Historic Park  
Gadsby's Tavern Museum  
George Washington's Mount Vernon  
The Getaway Driver  
Loretta Gray, Long & Foster Real Estate  
Greenstreet Gardens  
Hooray for Books!  
International Spy Museum  
Lavender Moon Cupcakery  
Little Theatre of Alexandria

Mariner Sailing School at Belle Haven Marina  
The Newseum  
Ourisman Ford/ Lincoln of Alexandria  
Paris Catering  
The People's Drug  
Pedego Electric Bikes  
Rita Restores  
Rocklands Barbecue & Grilling Company  
Serenity Day Spa  
Sip & Sew Old Town  
Stabler-Leadbetter Apothecary  
Studio Barre  
Waitesfield Telecom  
The Zebra  
Eugene W. Zimmerman Corporation

**C. Grants**

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

**O. Board Membership**

**A.**

The following officers served in 2018:

President: Dr. Patricia Sanders  
Vice President: Ed Horn  
Treasurer: Carter Refo  
Secretary: Kelly Jeffers

Other Board members who served were H. Talmage Day, Dianne Murphy, Laura Lieberman, Jill Gribbin, and Megan Ritter. Margaret Reagan served as ex-officio member, representing the Society of the Lees of Virginia.

**B.** Meghan White was elected to the Board in April. We are short of the fifteen voting members authorized in the By-Laws and are actively seeking new Board candidates.

**P. Outlook for 2019**

The museum faces significant challenges in 2019. A strong schedule of events and programs including partnerships with other cultural institutions in the area is scheduled, and the museum is poised to offer educational school programs. The Lee-Fendall House has shown great initiative and success in expanding and improving its public programming, resulting in increased recognition and relevance in the community. The museum must apply this success towards attracting charitable contributions and sponsorships, increasing its membership, and matching grant funding opportunities to operational budget items. The completion of action items identified during the strategic planning process will strengthen the museum's organizational structure and place it in a better position to identify and secure funding opportunities.