



Lee-Fendall House

MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

RESEARCH—NEW STORIES UNFOLDING

FALL 2020

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This year, work began on the creation of a new permanent exhibit to share the stories of African Americans, enslaved and free, who have lived and worked at the Lee-Fendall House since its construction in 1785. Research has taken staff and volunteers through archives, courthouses, and census records throughout Virginia and Maryland.

The Lee-Fendall House was built by enslaved craftspeople in 1785. African Americans continued to work in the home until 1969. Serious research into the lives of enslaved and free African Americans at Lee-Fendall House began in the early 2000s. The uncovered information began to appear in the interpretation and programming of the site a few years ago when the museum began regularly offering the special tour, *Under the Same Roof: Enslaved and Free African Americans at Lee-Fendall*. It was also incorporated into daily tours.

Philip Fendall, the first owner of the house, listed an enslaved man named Ned as chattel in his 1805 will. Ned was listed as a carpenter along with his wife, Beek. For a long time, this was all we knew about Ned's story. However, while looking through the early land records of Charles County, Maryland (Fendall's

childhood home), we discovered a reference to Fendall's purchase of three enslaved siblings in 1784 including "a lad named Ned." Based on his age, we believe this is the same Ned mentioned in 1805. As a young boy he developed his carpentry skills working to build the Lee-Fendall House. When you tour the house today, original woodwork can be seen in the main hall. It stands as a testament to Ned and other enslaved craftspeople, most of whose names we do not know.



Carrie Peterson's story was discovered through census records. In 1880, 18-year-old Carrie Peterson worked as a chambermaid for the Fleming family who lived in the Lee-Fendall House. Carrie had the job of cleaning the house and probably lived in quarters above the kitchen. We were able to trace Carrie though the years as she continued to work for Mary Lee Fleming in Washington D.C. It appears Carrie spent most of her life as a servant. She never had a family of her own. In a time when African American women had few options, many found themselves in domestic service.



The experiences of Ned and Carrie are only two of the stories we will share in our upcoming exhibit. Their lives matter. Their stories offer examples of perseverance and hope in the face of suffering and injustice. They left their indelible mark on the Lee-Fendall House and the collective history of Alexandria.

614 ORONOCO

This Fall you will find activities at the Lee-Fendall House Museum & Garden that are fun, historical, and as safe as we can make them. The plans for tours and events have been sent to the City of Alexandria Dept of Public Health for review. Social distancing, face masks, and other protective measures are in place to protect visitors, volunteers, and staff.

Sips & Secrets is going virtual this year, maintaining the fun of years past and the Roaring '20s. I had a sip of the special cocktail created for this event and it is perfect – not too sweet and very flavorful. His special grenadine is included in the **Bootleggers' bag**.

I do hope you will bring the kids to our new **Fall Frolic** event on October 24th (Details are on page X). Other activities for all ages are listed throughout this newsletter and on our website (www.leefendallhouse.org).

We are not letting the pandemic slow us down and we look forward to having you join us!

Martha Withers
Executive Director



The folks at Lee-Fendall House have always been adaptable!

When Prohibition came to town in 1916, the Downham family—who enjoyed life in the house on the proceeds of their distillery and liquor wholesaler—weren't willing to let the party come to an end. Our best conjecture is that they went into bootlegging, which kept up the house for nearly two more decades.

In that spirit, when this summer brought the realization that it would not be possible to host our **fifth annual speakeasy fundraiser** in person, we decided that it was still possible for the party to go on.

We hope you'll join us on the evening of **Saturday, September 26th**—our original date for *Sips & Secrets: A Speakeasy Night*—as we bring the event to you in the comfort of your living room. The evening will include three distinctive experiences.

First, local mixologist Alex Taylor from **King's Ransom**, which opened on King Street in February, will lead a lesson in preparing a **custom 1920s-inspired cocktail**.

Next, we'll **learn a few dances** from **Fidgety Feet**, the Washington area's premier Lindy Hop dance troupe and a favorite entertainer from this event in past years.

Finally, Lee-Fendall staff will lead a **virtual tour** that focuses on the house's Prohibition history.

Attendees will also have the chance to vote in our **costume contest**, preview items from our online **silent auction**, and learn more about the museum's **new initiatives** in historic preservation and education.

Tickets are available online at www.leefendallhouse.eventbrite.com

Bootlegger ticket purchasers receive a special treat bag to help make their evening. **Foxtrotter** tickets allow online access to the event—these are ideal for friends of the museum who live far away. A portion of every ticket is tax-deductible.

Event sponsors and silent auction donors will receive recognition during the event and via our website, social media, and press coverage. Please contact Megan Ritter Judt, event chairperson, at megan.ritter@leefendallhouse.org.

We hope you'll join us for an exciting evening that continues to make our work possible.



SPOTLIGHT ON: Chinese Export Sewing Box

For the women and girls of early America, homemaking tasks were an essential part of their education. Women in the middle and lower classes needed to be familiar with things like sewing, mending, and spinning out of necessity. Meanwhile, many upper-class women practiced a more hobby-like approach to tasks like needlepoint, which demonstrated their talents and education. A sewing box was critical for this process.

The sewing box in the Lee-Fendall House's collection is an ornate item that would have displayed the status of its owner. Fitting in with the growing country's desire for Chinese-made and styled furniture and decoration in the early nineteenth century. The remarkably intact, circa-1820, black lacquer sewing box has Chinese characters and hand-painted scenes of Chinese life in two shades of gold. It would have fit right in with the *beau monde* of American society.

On your visit to Lee-Fendall, be sure to get up close — inside, you will see intricately carved needlework and sewing accessories made of ivory. Items include a pin cushion clamp for to make pins easily accessible, a needle case with a screw-on cap, a thimble to protect one's finger from needle pricks, and thread winders.



LFHM Thanks the Junior League of Washington for Assistance in Reopening



Ask anyone familiar with nonprofits -- donations and other help are *always* welcome. This has been particularly true in the museum world as it adapts to life in a pandemic. So, it was especially helpful that the **Junior League of Washington** generously donated money to the Lee-Fendall House Museum. This helped the Museum adapt its exhibits for re-opening in Phase Three of Virginia's COVID protocol program. The Junior League's *Fridge Fund* grant covered the costs of carpet runners, lights to illuminate the museum's large Fendall-made dollhouse, exhibit cases, and stanchion ropes that have helped allow for socially-distanced tours. In addition, these items helped LFHM staff reorganize the exhibit rooms so visitors are now able to move among the rooms, getting a more interactive experience.

The JLW *Fridge Fund* program began when one of the Junior League's community partners needed emergency cash after its refrigerator broke down unexpectedly. They asked the JLW for help. It has since developed into a yearly opportunity for each of the League's community partners to seek assistance for similar,

unexpected costs or strategic improvements. These improvements help the organization carry out its mission and daily operations. Previous support from the League has helped Lee-Fendall obtain shelving for artifacts in its collections, a changing table for the museum's youngest visitors, and equipment for garden maintenance.



FALL FROLIC

Looking for active, seasonal fun in a small-scale environment for Kids, ages 3 to 12?

Put on your costumes and head into the Garden at the Lee-Fendall House Museum on Saturday, October 24, between 10 am and 4 pm.

- * Search for the **"Ghosts" in the Garden**
- * Try your best to **"Bob" for Apples** that swing on a string as you try to bite into them.
- * Take a **Trick or Treat Walk** (socially distanced, of course). When the music stops, you might get a treat OR you might have to perform a simple trick!
- * Create a **Suncatcher** Cauldron to take home. Make it here or there
- * Check out the Seasonal **Selfie Station** and participate in a **Costume Parade!**

Only 10 children per session, plus the adults accompanying them, and masks are required for **EVERYONE**.

The COVID-19 precautions for this event have been reviewed by an Environmental Health Specialist with the City of Alexandria Dept. of Health

Design By

MEET The LFHM Interns – 2020

These wonderful students help out so much with research and programs.
We thought you might like to get to know them and their work.

Collections Intern (Summer 2020) Catalogs Archeological Artifacts



Hello, my name is **Francesca Maisano**. I am a rising senior at the University of Mary Washington, pursuing a bachelor's degree in Historic Preservation. This past summer, I was the Collections

Management Intern here at the Lee-Fendall House. My main project was cataloging and photographing artifacts from the 2010 archaeological excavation of the garden. In total, I created 872 object records in our collections database for this project, complete with pictures and information! In addition, I wrote eight weekly social media post about one or a group of artifacts, talking about their history and their connection to the Lee-Fendall House and its inhabitants.

Though this internship, I gained and refined skills and knowledge that I can bring to future endeavors, whether in my college courses or my career. Two of the valuable skills that I gained are cataloging artifacts and using PastPerfect, the software used by many museums to manage their collections. This internship has also been invaluable for letting me practice my research and writing skills, while creating the weekly social media posts. Through this internship, I was able to see what collections management is like and how a small house museum runs. I also found this internship an incredibly fun and enjoyable experience. I loved handling, researching, and learning about the many different objects I catalogued. It is incredible to me how a single artifact can tell a centuries-long story, and I have truly enjoyed getting to share these stories with other people.

Before this internship, I would never have thought about the history of the nickel, how tobacco shaped Alexandria, or 18th and 19th century butchery practices. I enjoyed seeing real life examples of what I had learned about in my college courses. One of the social media posts I wrote highlighted some nails found in the archaeological dig and they reminded me of a class I took last semester about building technologies, a course which talked about, among many things, the evolution of nails and nail construction. It was very cool for me to see the concepts and history I learned from this class in a real-life setting.

Education Intern (Fall 2020) Working Storytime & Fall Frolic

Hi there, my name is **Madison Menz** and I am the Museum Education Intern here at the Lee-Fendall House this fall. I'll be assisting with the many upcoming education programs and initiatives at the museum.

I am a senior at American University studying History and originally from the great state of Ohio. Dublin, Ohio, where I am from, is known for *Cornhenge* which is like Stonehenge but with statues of cement corn.

This internship is something I have been looking forward to in my journey in the field of public history and museum work. I also am looking forward to working with the staff and volunteers who have welcomed me here wholeheartedly.

One of my other goals is to train the squirrels in the garden – let's see how that goes!



Francesca Maisano (cont'd)

Altogether, I truly enjoyed interning at the Lee-Fendall House and getting to learn about and feel more connected to the city of Alexandria and to this house. While my internship may be over, the Lee-Fendall House will always hold a very special place in my heart.

THERE IS MORE TO FALL AT THE LEE-FENDALL HOUSE THAN PUMPKIN SPICE!!

JOIN US

Details and tickets for upcoming Lee-Fendall House events may be found at [our Eventbrite page!](#)

SPECIAL EVENT (virtual)

SEPT 26 – SIPS & SECRETS: A SPEAKEASY NIGHT, 7:00 PM:

Join us for a virtual Sips & Secrets: A Speakeasy Night. This annual event celebrates the house's Prohibition-era history when we were home to Alexandria's liquor wholesalers. All proceeds support our mission to provide a place for the Alexandria community to explore our shared history and discover its relevance to today.

HALLOWEEN EVENTS

GRIEF AND GHOSTS TOUR

OCT 23 & 24; 30 & 31, 7:00, 7:30, 8:00, 8:30, & 9:00 PM

Celebrate Halloween with a look at Victorian mourning traditions coupled with stories of tragic deaths and mysterious occurrences at the Lee-Fendall House. Customs such as draping the mirrors after a death, funeral practices, hair jewelry, mourning clothing, and séances will be explored. These tours offer a rare opportunity to see the house after dark. Tickets are \$10 and must be reserved due to limited space. Face masks are required.

OCT 24 - FALL FROLIC, 10:00 AM-4:00 PM

see article for more information on this NEW event for children ages 4 – 12. Sessions start on the hour and numbers are limited to follow COVID-19 guidelines.

WALKING TOURS:

SEPT 5 & 19 – PILLARS TO PAVERS WALKING TOUR, 10:00 AM:

Since the 1960s, the City of Alexandria has seen its older buildings and spaces being restored, preserved, and reused in different ways. This walking tour explores the streets of Alexandria with stops to look at how buildings have been preserved and reused for future generations to enjoy.

SEPT 12 & OCT 17 – PROHIBITION IN ALEXANDRIA WALKING TOUR, 10:00 AM

Discover the forgotten stories of teetotalers and bootleggers on this walking tour of Prohibition-era Alexandria. Learn about the dramatic campaign to ban alcohol in Virginia which threatened a long tradition of alcohol production and sale. The tour begins at the Lee-Fendall House, home to the Downham family, one of the city's most prominent liquor dealers prior to Prohibition.

SEPT 19 & OCT 24 – BEYOND THE BATTLEFIELD: A WALKING TOUR OF CIVIL WAR ALEXANDRIA, 9:00 AM

This walking tour tells the stories of soldiers, citizens, and enslaved people in Civil War Alexandria, including the military occupation, the conversion of public and private buildings into hospitals, and emancipation.

SPECIAL HOUSE TOURS

SEPT 5 – BLOOD AND STRIKES: AMERICAN LABOR IN THE 20TH CENTURY, 2:00 PM

From deadly mine explosions to wartime strikes, the history of the 20th century American labor movement is full of violence and controversy. Explore the struggle for worker's rights at the home of one of its most powerful spokesmen, John L. Lewis.

NOV 7 – UNDER THE SAME ROOF: ENSLAVED AND FREE SERVANTS AT THE LEE-FENDALL HOUSE, 2:00 PM

Explore the Lee-Fendall House through the stories of the enslaved and free African Americans who lived and worked in the home as domestic servants, both before and after the Civil War. This tour presents a fuller story of the many people who shaped this house over the course of its history.

NOV 21 – STORIES IN THE ARCHITECTURE, 2:00 PM

Venture behind the scenes, from the basement to the attic, and explore the history of the Lee-Fendall House through its architecture. Changes in style and home technology have all left their mark on the home, from when it was built in 1785 through its continued use as a home in the twentieth century. This tour includes parts of the house that are not regularly open to the public.

BOOK TALK

SEPT 19 – VIRTUAL BOOK TALK WITH RICHARD BELL – *Stolen*, 7:00 PM

Dr. Richard Bell will virtually discuss his book *Stolen: Five Free Boys Kidnapped into Slavery and Their Astonishing Odyssey Home*, in which he researches a story of kidnapping, enslavement and human trafficking in 19th century America.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS: STORIES FROM THE PAST (in person and virtual)

Join us in person or online for a history-themed story and craft every **Thursday at 10:00 AM!** This story time is designed to introduce cultural concepts to young learners ages 4-7, however children of all ages are welcome!

- SEPT 3 – *WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?*
- SEPT 10 – *SEWING STORIES*
- SEPT 17– *WE CAME TO AMERICA*
- SEPT 24 – *THE TWEEDLES GO ELECTRIC*
- OCT 1 – *BRICK BY BRICK*
- OCT 8 – *THE STREET BENEATH MY FEET*

HOMESCHOOL DAY

OCT 16 – ARCHEOLOGY DAY AT LEE-FENDALL HOUSE, 10:00 AM-4:00 PM

The Lee-Fendall House Museum welcomes homeschoolers for Homeschool Archeology Day on Friday, October 16! In honor of Virginia Archaeology Month, we will explore what archaeology teaches us about the past. Learn about the excavations that were done at the Lee-Fendall House and the things they revealed.

DECEMBER at the LFHM

DEC 3 (6:30 PM) & 6 (2:00 PM)– Holiday Kissing Ball Workshop:

Learn how to create your own traditional holiday kissing ball using fresh boxwood from the Lee-Fendall's own garden!

DEC 5, 12, & 19 – Holiday Candlelight Tours, 5:00-8:00 PM:

Celebrate the holiday season with evening candlelight tours of the Lee-Fendall House decked out in Victorian splendor. Our antique toy exhibit will also be on view.

DEC 12 – A Victorian Christmas, 10:00 AM-4:00 PM:

Experience the wonder of the season by visiting the Lee-Fendall House for a family-friendly Victorian Christmas! Enjoy traditional décor, music, seasonal crafts, a visit by Santa, and more!

CONTACT US @

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