



Lee-Fendall House

MUSEUM AND GARDEN

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2021

STORY WALK COMES TO LEE FENDALL HOUSE

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This past year, many historic sites and libraries closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This forced them to be creative and re-design their traditional story time programs in safe and innovative ways. One of these new methods is the outdoor story walk. Pages from children’s books popped up on signs along park paths and encouraged families to get outside and read together. Realizing that the Lee-Fendall garden offered a perfect setting for a story walk, our Manager of Education Amanda Roper reached out to the staff of the Alexandria Library to create some for our garden.

Lee Fendall House’s first story (April 21-May 31), featured *Compost Stew: An A to Z Recipe for the Earth* by Mary McKenna Siddals. Children learn about the composting process in a fun and engaging way while walking through the Garden. At the same time, they could see the results of composting in our compost bin and the Garden itself.

Our second story walk will go up this summer (June and July) featuring the book *Señorita Mariposa* by Ben Gundersheimer (Mister G). Explore the migration of Monarch butterflies between Canada and Mexico, with text in English and Spanish. Many butterflies, including Monarchs, enjoy visiting our pollinator garden every year. We will also be collaborating with the Alexandria Library on a virtual class for students about pollinators on July 28th. We are excited about this new community partnership. Hope to see you in the Garden!

Amanda Roper, Manager of Education at Lee-Fendall House, and Michelle Biber, Beatley Central Library Youth Services Manager, posing with our spring Story Walk.



Spotlight: Concert Grand Square Piano, Chickering, Boston (c.1850)



The Lee-Fendall House was home to many pianos in its history. The make and model changed with fashion, technology, and the finances of the families living here. Making music was an important part of every household and young women, especially, received lessons. They were expected to play for company and to entertain the family on a quiet evening.

This piano in the Cazenove's formal parlor is one of the best American-made pianos. Crafted from rosewood veneers with ivory and ebony keys, this piano has a one-

piece cast iron plate to handle greater tension on the strings giving greater sound and reverberation. These pianos were known for their high quality and for winning over 200 awards, including the Imperial Cross of the Legion of Honor (French).



614 ORONOCO

Well, we have managed to stay open and maintain programs throughout the pandemic! The thanks go to our supporters and the Board for their continuing vision for the museum. Some creative thinking on the part of staff and volunteers helped, too. We modified events, limited numbers, and worked closely with the Public Health Department to be sure our events were safe. Now, as more people are vaccinated and people are getting out and about again, we look forward to expanding on what we learned. We followed ALX Promise and are now implementing ALX Promise Gold.

It's looking like a fun and healthy summer ahead. We hope you will join us for a Walking Tour, Trivia Nights, or a simple stroll in the garden!



Martha

Martha Withers
Executive Director

We can date the piano from its serial number (1000 series) and the Chickering, Boston name. The

company, founded in 1823, changed its name several times as partners came and went. From 1850 to 1852, the company name was simply "Chickering, Boston." Following a factory fire in 1853, it became "Chickering and Sons."

An interesting story: Henry Steinweg, a new immigrant, held up Jenny Lind's (The Swedish Nightingale) debut performance in America, promoted by P.T. Barnum. He was infatuated with the piano, seemingly the same type that now lives at the Lee-Fendall House. He then went on to design his new concert grand piano—the Steinways we know today.

PEOPLE OF NOTE AROUND THE LEE-FENDALL HOUSE MUSEUM

Summer Collections Management Intern Emma Saaty



My name is Emma Saaty. I am a rising junior at the George Washington University, pursuing a Biological Anthropology major with Archaeology and Journalism minors. I am from Arlington, Virginia, and I have always been passionate about local history. Recording and preserving both material and oral culture drew me to my major. Experiences working in archaeological laboratories and museums helped me to realize that regional museum work is where I hope to direct my career. I am very excited to begin my collections management internship at the Lee-Fendall House, learning how to care for artifacts and archives to tell the story of the rich history of this property.

Board Member: JASON ROCKETT

Welcome Jason! Get to know a little about the newest member of the Lee-Fendall House Museum Board--in his own words.

Bowing down in blind credulity, as is his custom, before mere authority and tradition of the elders, superstitiously swallowing a story he could not test at the time by experiment or private judgement, Jason Rockett is firmly of the opinion that he was born on the 16th of December in Machias, Maine. A tender boy known for cribbing the lines of his ancestors, as he just did, found it queer that his kinspeople refrained from doing the same. They told him, "that is all in the past. It's history," and therefore not important. Jason differed from that opinion and came to the conclusion that the 107 billion individuals who have ever lived, might have as much, if not more to teach us than the 7.8 billion who populate the topsoil today. Were his ancestors not screaming at him from the grave to be given form in his present mind? (*cont'd on p 6*)



SIPS AND SECRETS: A SPEAKEASY NIGHT MAKES ITS RETURN



Bathtub gin, flapper dresses, and jazz music – all the delights of the Roaring Twenties and all best enjoyed in person! The fast-paced, hard-partying culture of the 1920s came on the heels of a difficult time in history. As the world recovered from the ravages of the War to End All Wars, the 1918 Flu Pandemic, and the Depression of 1920, Americans began popping champagne corks, raising hemlines, and cutting a rug.

Reflecting the times and in that spirit, the Lee-Fendall House Museum is thrilled to announce that our annual gala fundraiser *Sips & Secrets: A Speakeasy Night* is BACK and IN-PERSON this fall. Mark your calendars for the evening of *Saturday, September 26th*, and get ready to celebrate with us in the garden. Since its inception *Sips and Secrets* has raised more than \$30,000 for critical preservation projects and educational programs. Lee-Fendall House serves the City of Alexandria as an independent, non-profit museum that receives no regular taxpayer support.

We look forward to bringing back all the elements of *Sips & Secrets* that have led one local publication to dub it “the social event of the season” – including live jazz and dancing, 1920s-themed cocktails, and lots of speakeasy fun.

Details and tickets will be available soon at leefendallhouse.eventbrite.com. Sponsorship opportunities are available, providing high visibility for our community partners. With the help of our sponsors, all proceeds from ticket sales support the Lee-Fendall House nonprofit mission to engage the Alexandria community with its history. Anyone interested may contact Megan Ritter Judt, event chair, at megan.ritter@leefendallhouse.org or 410-259-9273. We’re looking forward to dancing the Charleston with you in the garden this fall!

SUMMER 2021 EVENTS

Details and tickets for upcoming Lee-Fendall House events may be found at our Eventbrite [Tickets](#) page! Advance registration is required, except where noted.

For ongoing safety, Museum staff will be following all recommended health guidelines. The Lee-Fendall House recommends face masks and requires them for some programs. Social Distancing is encouraged and participation numbers are limited.

CHILDREN’S STORYTIME

STORIES FROM THE PAST

Fridays @ 10:30 AM

JULY 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, & 30th

AUGUST 6th, 13th, & 20th

Join us for a history-themed story and craft in our garden every Friday morning throughout the summer! This story time is designed to introduce cultural concepts to young learners ages 3-6, however children of all ages are welcome! The program will take place outdoors and all craft materials will be sanitized and individually packaged for your child. \$6 per participating child, parents/chaperones are free of charge. .
Questions? please contact our Manager of Education amanda.roper@leefendallhouse.org.

SPECIAL EVENTS

TRIVIA NIGHTS AT HISTORIC SITES

Fridays @ 7:00 PM

JUNE 11th, 25th

JULY 9th, 23rd

AUGUST 6th, 20th

Grab your friends and test your knowledge! Staff members at Carlyle House Historic Park and the Lee-Fendall House Museum combine their knowledge to create bi-weekly trivia nights in the beautiful Lee-Fendall gardens. With a different theme each night, test your knowledge on everything from pop culture

to history. *There will be weekly prizes for the winning team as well as a grand prize for the team that wins the most points over the entire summer!*

\$8 per person covers entry, snacks, and one complimentary drink. Additional drinks can be purchased at our bar. Teams are limited to 6 people, ages 21+ only. Attendees should wear face masks when not seated at their tables. Tables will be spaced to allow for social distancing.

OLD TOWN SCAVENGER HUNT **June 12th, 11:00 AM—3:00 PM**

Enjoy a summer afternoon exploring the western part of Old Town with a scavenger hunt created by Carlyle House Historic Park and Lee-Fendall House Museum. Pick up your scavenger hunt materials at the Lee-Fendall House starting at 11:00 AM (the last scavenger hunt will be handed out at 3:00 PM) and take your time exploring Old Town history. The hunt will end at the newly opened Goodies Frozen Custard & Treats at the Old Ice House. Completed scavenger hunts will receive a BOGO free coupon for Goodies.

[Advance registration](#) is encouraged but not required. \$8 per team of 2; \$4 per individual or \$12 per family of 4 (includes 2 hunts; \$2 per extra scavenger hunt sheet). Rain or Shine.

WALKING TOURS

BEYOND THE BATTLEFIELD: A WALKING TOUR OF CIVIL WAR ALEXANDRIA* **June 12th @ 9:00 AM**

Share the stories of soldiers, citizens, and self-liberated African Americans in Civil War Alexandria. Learn about the military occupation, the conversion of public and private buildings into hospitals, and emancipation. \$15 per person. Limited to 10 participants. Lasts approximately an hour and a half. Walking tours take Rain or Shine –please wear appropriate shoes and clothing.

FOCUS TOURS

UNDER THE SAME ROOF: ENSLAVED AND FREE SERVANTS AT THE LEE-FENDALL HOUSE* **@ 2:00 PM**
June 19th **August 14th**

Explore the Lee-Fendall House from the perspectives of the enslaved and free African Americans who lived and worked in the home as domestic servants, both before and after the Civil War. Hear the stories of how they built and shaped the Lee-Fendall House throughout its history. \$10 per person; limited to 8 participants

HISTORIC GARDEN TOUR AT LEE-FENDALL HOUSE* **July 10th @ 10:00 AM**

Discover the history of the Lee-Fendall Garden from its eighteenth-century beginnings to the present. Learn how the use and appearance of the garden has changed over time. See recent efforts to restore the garden and create an educational space and urban wildlife habitat. Tour is led by garden volunteer and retired biologist, Roger Monthey. \$10 per person; limited to 10 participants

STORIES IN THE ARCHITECTURE* **July 24th @ 2:00 PM**

Explore the history of the Lee-Fendall House through its architecture and visit parts of the house that are not regularly open to the public. See how changes in style and home technology have left their mark on the home, from when it was built in 1785 through its continued use as a home in the twentieth century. \$10 per person; limited to 8 participants

Free for museum members. Please contact the museum to make your reservations.

JASON ROCKETT IN HIS OWN WORDS (cont'd from p. 3)

“Those who refrain from pursuing historical inquiry”, Jason would come to say, “are at the mercy of fallacious nightmares about the past.” This pursuit came to define his life, but the path to this pursuit was not one which was direct. Following a brief stint as a culinarian in Crescent City, where he learned how not to ruin a roux, and then as a cryptologic linguist in the service of the nation, at which time he learned to говорить по-русски, his childhood compulsion to pursue historical inquiry led him to a university of note in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Like an evergreen seminarian who tries to master Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica* before his earlier *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Jason was at sixes and sevens in his first year of studies, and no closer to his original pursuit, the pursuit of historical inquiry. Harvard had left him with mere trivia about the past, which he was not taught to verify, and courses in historiography, so that he would know the art of writing about that which he was not properly taught to verify.

A young, accomplished Scottish lowlander named Niall Ferguson came to stay campus in Jason’s second year, and offered him the insight that all history is the history of thought. It could only be verified by the written and preserved mementos of past lives. He came to understand that even when one inquires about the past, those inquiries must be questions which correlate to a past reality, otherwise it is another form of fallacious nightmare, masquerading as a caricature of the past.

Jason currently resides in Alexandria, next to some of the 107 billion who have ever lived, with his beautiful wife, Dr. Ruth Rockett, who aspires to beat Gwen Jorgensen in the pool, and his charming stepson Dash, who is quite done with being six, and now aspires for eight years of age with all his heart. Jason is a sinful Roman Catholic who one day hopes to be a faithful servant to the Lord. He continues to crib his ancestors, one of whom thought that, like a brief bio, a good detective story should end with its own particular questions answered and its own primary problem solved.

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