



# The Association of Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia

*The District's Oldest Historic Organization – Founded December 7, 1865 – Our 159th Year!*

*Welcoming Young & Old Alike to Join in Remembering the Past and Working for an Even Better Future*

*March 2024 / Bulletin 180*

*Join us for the next AOI of DC Luncheon Event!*

**Thursday,  
March 21, 2024**

***Mystery Solved:  
Why There Were Two AOIs  
and How They Are Connected  
through One Common Ancestor  
with Sherri Sewall  
and Bill Brown***

**11:30am  
Lunch & Program**

Woman's National Democratic Club  
1526 New Hampshire Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20036

*(One block north of Dupont Circle Metro  
\$10 validated parking diagonally across  
from club at 11 Dupont Circle)*

Email RSVP to [ricmarino@msn.com](mailto:ricmarino@msn.com) with your name, names of any guests, and choice of salmon, flank steak, or vegetarian meal. The 3-course lunch is \$40.00 per person. In addition to paying by cash, check or card at the door, you can now pay in advance by Zelle using [aioifdc@gmail.com](mailto:aioifdc@gmail.com). Please add "March Luncheon" in the comment line.

In addition, AOI members can now RSVP and pay for themselves and their guests by credit card via the **Members Only** portal on our website – <https://www.aoidc.org/401/login.php?redirect=/members-only-portal.html>, password: 1865.

## *From Our February Luncheon ...*

Fifty members and guests came together for AOI's first lunch meeting of 2024. Among the long list of announcements:

- ❖ Various different opportunities to participate in Black History Month this February, including the Arts Club *Songs of Freedom* and *Live! At the Library* Thursday nights;
- ❖ AOI has provided seed money to help establish the DC Archives Foundation;
- ❖ The board is still soliciting *your* stories for our "About Our Members" column – email something about your story and AOI connection to [aioifdc@gmail.com](mailto:aioifdc@gmail.com);
- ❖ The AOI [website](#) now has archived past newsletters – check it out; and lastly
- ❖ Please renew your AOI membership – renew online at our [website](#) or by mail!

Our February presentation featured The Theatre Lab School of Dramatic Arts Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director **Deb Gottesman** staging an interactive discussion of its programs at the intersection of theater education and social welfare in DC. Primary among these is *Life Stories*, which uses theatre and performance to help underrepresented populations overcoming issues such as discrimination, trauma, and PTSD to tell their own stories based on their lived experience. In what might be a first for AOI, Deb even recruited members of the audience (including at least one ershwhile performer) to participate on-stage in an enlightening – and fun – improvisational poetry exercise to demonstrate the effectiveness

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*Above: February speaker Deb Gottesman, co-founder of The Theatre Lab..*



*Right: Deb Gottesman leads a panel of AOI volunteer recruits in a classic "I AM FROM" poetry performance.*



**2024 Board of Directors**

**Officers:**

- Cindy Gueli, President
- John Edwards, Vice-President
- Ric Marino, Secretary
- Carolyn Michell, Treasurer
- Nelson Rimensnyder, Historian

**Past-Presidents:**

- Thomas Neale
- Bill Brown
- Jan A.K. Evans

**Directors:**

- Kimberly Bender
- Gary Scott
- Sherri Sewall

The Board of Directors meets at the Women’s National Democratic Club at 10 a.m. on the Tuesday of the week prior to a scheduled luncheon meeting.

Luncheon RSVP Voice-mail:  
202-342-1865

Website: [www.aoidc.org](http://www.aoidc.org)

E-mail: [aioifdc@gmail.com](mailto:aioifdc@gmail.com)

YouTube: [@theaioifdc](https://www.youtube.com/@theaioifdc)

Follow us on Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/www.aioifdc.org](https://www.facebook.com/www.aioifdc.org), which may contain more timely events and calls-to-action than our web site.

AOI’s Newsletters are printed and distributed by:



*From Our February Luncheon, continued from page 1*

of performance to enable participants to find their voice, or as she put it, finding the “other 80 piano keys beyond the octave where we usually live our life.”

AOI historian Nelson Rimensnyder wrapped up the luncheon with several trivia questions dealing with electoral votes, presidential visits to AOI, and Frederick Douglass’ estate.

View the video of the full February luncheon meeting on the AOI website at [www.aoidc.org/aoi-luncheon-recordings.html](http://www.aoidc.org/aoi-luncheon-recordings.html).

*In Memoriam ...*



*Above: AOI Past President Tom Neale at our May 2023 lunch presentation.*

With great sadness, AOI members joined Past-President Bill Brown at our February lunch in celebrating the life of Past-President **Tom Neale**, who died January 23<sup>rd</sup> after battling a series of illnesses over the past year. A native of upstate New York with a family history in Harrisburg, PA, Tom came to DC for his bachelor’s degree at Georgetown University. A 53-year veteran of the Congressional Research Service, he became a specialist in American government and elections, testifying on these issues before the House of Representatives and the Senate, as well as lecturing on the U.S. elections process at various venues. A fierce and knowledgeable advocate for all things

DC – as well as the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War – Tom was a board member of AOI and most recently our president, ably shepherding the organization through the tumultuous and existential years of the COVID pandemic. It goes without saying that Tom will be sorely missed, and continue to be fondly remembered.



We also remember AOI member **Bro. David William (Alfred) Richardson, O.S.C.**, who passed away this past October 15, 2023. Known for a wry sense of humor, Richardson worked for several years at the archives of Catholic University and the Archdiocese for the Military Services.



AOI notes the passing of **James Fisher**, our November 2023 lunch speaker, on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. As we heard at that presentation, James spent the last decade of his life advocating for Americans to reckon with the residual harms from Black land loss like that his family endured a century ago when the community of Chevy Chase DC removed them from Broad Branch Road to build a whites-only school. James also spoke frequently in various civic and professional settings about racial displacement and the specific history of Dry Meadows, the previous name of his family’s acreage on Broad Branch Road.



*Right: James Fisher poses with a placard installed after rededication of Chevy Chase DC’s Lafayette-Pointer Park in honor of the legacy of his ancestor, Capt. George Pointer.*



### Other News ...

Mark your calendars for the 2024 **DC History Conference**, April 4-6. Sponsored by the DC History Center, the DC Public Library, and HumanitiesDC, the free event at the MLK, Jr. Memorial Library will be celebrating 50 years of providing a welcoming, educational, and stimulating forum for original research on and engagement with the history of the Washington, DC metropolitan area – prioritizing the local city but including nearby Maryland and Virginia, and the federal government. Check out their website at [conference.dchistory.org](https://conference.dchistory.org) to register and get more information, including the complete program of the conference sessions and events.



*Above: Last year's conference featured a wide variety of panel discussions, including a symposium on the anniversary of DC Home Rule. (Photos: DC History Conf.)*



*Above & right: The History Network is an opportunity for conference attendees to meet representatives from organizations doing humanities-based work across the DMV – including AOI! (Photos: DC History Conf.)*



AOI notes that **Ann Panning**, a member since 2010, died this past November 28<sup>th</sup> after a brief illness. Born in Georgetown, Ann resided in Alexandria and came to AOI through Richard and Barbara Drechsler.



Washington lost another institution, albeit a more recent one, on February 23 with the shuttering of **DCist**, the on-line source for news and cultural features that has operated since 2004. [WAMU](https://www.wamu.org), American University's local NPR affiliate announced the discontinuation of its on-line extension along with other budget cuts to its staff. DCist readers can still get local news and lifestyle coverage by listening or streaming WAMU 88.5 radio.

For 107 years, AOI preserved the remaining artifacts entrusted to their care in 1908 as a result of the AOI's enduring partnership with the remaining members of the Veteran Volunteer Firemen's Association of D.C. Among the several pieces of apparatus was the 1905 American LaFrance horse-drawn steam pumper, which served as Engine 18 in the district. The **Friendship Fire Association Museum**, the engine's current custodian, is now seeking donations to cosmetically restore this piece of DC history, an initiative of our past member and Fire Department Liaison Officer Lt. **Jim Embry**, in time for the centennial observance of the last running of the DC's fire horses in June 2025. AOI encourages its members and friends to help support this worthwhile effort; if interested, please visit the FFA website at [friendshipfireassoc.org](https://friendshipfireassoc.org).

*Address Correction Requested*

**The Association of Oldest Inhabitants  
of the District of Columbia**

c/o 815 Woodside Parkway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

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***Mark Your Calendar...***

Upcoming AOI meeting dates and tentative speakers:

- Thurs., Mar. 21 – *Mystery Solved: Why There Were Two AOIs and How They Are Connected through One Common Ancestor*, with Sherri Sewall and Bill Brown
- Thurs., April 18 – *The Siege of Washington: The Untold Story of Twelve Days that Shook the Union*, with John Lockwood
- Sun., April 21 – *DC Collections Community Day* at the Heurich House Museum & Garden
- Thurs. May 16 – *Hidden Alleyways of Washington, DC: A History*, with Kim Prothro Williams
- Thurs. June 20 – *Under the Ballpark: Lost Landmarks of DC's LGBTQ Community*, with the Rainbow History Project

**NOTE:** All events, meeting subjects and speakers have been invited to appear, but nevertheless are tentative. Be sure to check our [website](#) for speaker updates and/or last-minute changes.

**BE ADVISED:** In case of inclement weather call AOI at 202-342-1865 for last minute recorded information.

**SPRING AHEAD!**  
Don't be late to the March AOI luncheon -  
Remember to move your clocks ahead on  
March 10.



*The Whittemore House (1892-94), home of the Women's National Democratic Club, hosts the AOI's monthly luncheon meetings. The National Register property was originally built for Sarah Adams Whittemore, and was purchased by the WNDC in 1927.*