



The Association of Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia

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

**The District's Oldest Civic Organization –
Founded December 7, 1865 – Our 154th Year!**

**Bulletin #158
September 2019**

“Myrtilla Miner’s Mission: Teaching Young African- American Girls”

By John Richardson

Heurich House Director **Kim Bender** spoke to the AOI luncheon audience June 21 about the heroic mission of Myrtilla Miner to educate young African-American girls in the District of Columbia. Bender paid special tribute to AOI for its role in the story of Heurich House, which hosts the AOI board of directors for its bi-monthly meetings. (AOI President Jan Houser is a granddaughter of brewer Christian Heurich, builder of Heurich House). Bender said that a substantial AOI grant during its sesquicentennial celebration dramatically expanded Heurich House’s ability to tell its founder’s story.

Bender pointed out the coincidence of Myrtilla Miner’s eventual success in building her school for free African-American girls on three acres of D.C. farmland in Square 115, the exact location of Heurich House today. Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” gave Myrtilla \$1,000 – a very large sum in those days -- from book sales that made the purchase possible.

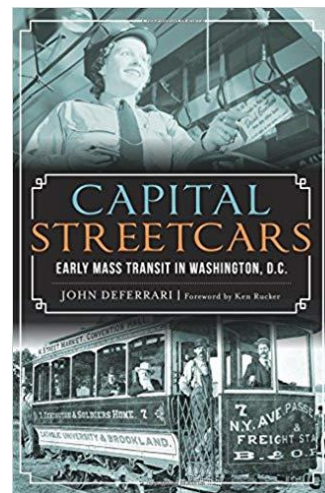
Myrtilla Miner was born in 1815 into a family with a socially active father who lived a frontier life in Brookfield, NY. Myrtilla, never physically strong, was a determined woman who early in life decided to become a teacher of young black girls. As a young woman intent on seeing slavery at first-hand, she became a teacher in Mississippi, where she was told that it was illegal to teach black students.

Returning north and even more determined, she met and impressed Frederick Douglass...

(Cont’d. page 3)

September’s Luncheon Event:

**“Bygone D.C. Street Cars and Transportation”
with John DeFerrari and featuring Member Reminiscences**



Please join us...

Friday, **Sept. 20**, at the **Capitol Skyline Hotel** (free Parking) 10 I (‘eye’) Street, SW. (Metro Rail to Navy Yard Station), Social Time (cash bar) 11:45 a.m., Luncheon served at 12:30 p.m.

(\$35 per person - please make your check payable to “AOI” and have it completed prior to arrival or bring exact payment).

Reservations are a must! Otherwise your food preference may be unavailable. RSVP to our voice mail **202-342-1865**, not later than noon Tues., Sept. 17, 2019. **This voice mail box number is the only means to make a reservation.** Late reservations make planning very difficult for us and **failure by you to cancel prior to Noon on Thurs., 9/19, will result in you being charged.** Please be prepared to leave your name, the number in your party, your guest’s names for name tags, your meal preferences (***Grilled Salmon with Kang Pao sauce, Grilled Skyline Chicken Breast, Grilled Black Angus Flank Steak, or Braised Ratatouille of Vegetables***) and a telephone number where you may be contacted should we have a question or a last-minute event cancellation.

Future Meetings...



The AOI's 154th Year -- Meeting dates and tentative speakers:

Oct. 18, 2019 – Jenny Masur, “Heroes of the Underground Railroad around Washington, D.C.”

Nov. 15, 2019 – Robert Headley & Pat Padua, “Motion Picture Exhibition in Washington, D.C.”; annual election of officers and directors

Jan. 1, 2020 – New Year’s Day Brunch Buffet

NOTE: All meeting subjects and speakers have been invited to appear, but nevertheless are tentative. If our published RSVP line (202-342-1865) is not answering or appears out-of-order, please call 202-342-1638.

Remember: No luncheon meetings July/August nor December/January

Note: The Board of Directors meets at the Heurich House Museum at 10 a.m. on the Monday immediately prior to a scheduled luncheon meeting.

Be Advised: In case of inclement weather call AOI at 202-342-1865 for last minute information.

If You Were Not At Our Last Meeting...

[Draft minutes of our last meeting for approval at the June 21, 2019 luncheon.]

The Association of Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia (AOI) held the fifth luncheon meeting of its 154th year at the Capitol Skyline Hotel at noon Friday, June 21, 2019 with 72 members and guests present. **Vice-President Bill Brown** conducted the business meeting in the absence of **President Jan Evans**, recuperating from a fall. He called for approval of the notes of the May meeting, which were printed in the current newsletter. With a correction noted by Bill that **Richard West** *was* present at the May luncheon and there being no further corrections or additions, upon a motion made by **Cathy Panov** and seconded by **Lauren Tawil**, the notes were approved and their reading waived.

New Members: There were four member applications for consideration: **Noreen Beatley** (2016 article in *The Guardian*); **Bliss Cartwright** (new member Marcia Rock); **Sarah Kirchen** (member Nancy Harris); and **Rita Kirshstein** (again, member Marcia Rock) None were present today. The new members were approved upon a motion, seconded by **Carl Cole** and **Charles Szlinker**.

Treasurer **Hulit Taylor** presented her report:

Membership

- We now have 300 members this year, 17 of whom have joined since January.
- Those who do not renew by the end of this month will be removed from our list of active members.

Expenses

- Usually we report our non-routine expenses and thought you might be interested in knowing what some of our monthly expenses average.
 - Printing and mailing the Newsletter costs \$590 each month
 - These luncheon meetings are about \$350
 - Telephone and internet average \$70
- These expenses are covered by membership dues, interest and dividends from our Investments and donations.

Investments

- Even with the recent fluctuations in the stock market, the value of our investment account has increased almost \$11,000 since the beginning of the year.

Bill turned the lectern over to AOI Director **Tom Neale** who addressed the membership (and to add more eloquently than captured in these notes):

- As you may know, Bill Brown, long-time President and now Vice-President, is stepping down from his duties as an Officer of AOI, but will remain as a Director on the AOI Board.
- Over the years, Bill has performed a myriad of the tasks that make our organization so successful. Some of these, he will continue handling, but not all.
- At our Board meeting on Monday, we realized that we need technical and administrative assistance.
 - If you know of anyone who would enjoy part-time work as either an administrator for clerical duties or as a web master to maintain our website, please let a Board member know.
 - We have cards and self-addressed envelopes available for you to write your suggestions, contact us via email or call any board member at their number listed on the monthly newsletter
- Rest assured that the AOI itself is not changing, but our administrative duties are.
- The board urges you to think how you can support AOI's transition and keep us strong into the future.
- Your offers of assistance, ideas and suggestions are greatly appreciated.

Vice-President Brown thanked **Director Neale** for his gracious remarks commenting on Bill's years of service to the organization over two decades. He then welcomed everyone on the Officers' & Directors' behalf and in addition to spouses and family members: Member **Joe Akers** had 12 guests with him – **Hubert Bell, Clarence & Joanne**

Edwards, Cindy Etheridge, Clay & Jannie Goldston, Fred Lester, Elizabeth Prah, Wesley & Estalla Thomas and Bernard & Sylvia Thompson. Gayle George had with her Barbara Curtis and Mary Penn-Beveney; Martha Jewett & Marvin Jones were Loretta Neumann’s guests; Cathy Paunov had with her sister Donna Pennington, both are daughters of deceased member Bill Pennington; Nelson Rimensnyder had Douglas Gilbert as his guest; Richard Marino had Walter Springman as his guest and Charles Szlinker had with him returning guest Charles Asanti.

Brief Announcements: Lynetta and Stewart Stevens were available for members to purchase tickets to their one-act play “The White House Chandeliers” being performed at TheArc on Saturday, July 13th at 2pm and 6pm, 1901 Mississippi Ave., SE. Lynetta said the only prop they were missing was a chandelier and appealed to anyone who might have one to loan for the day. Loretta Neumann encouraged everyone to attend the 155th Anniversary of the Battle of Ft. Stevens from 10am – 4pm on July 13th. Gayle George invited anyone interested in Talbot-Weems-Savoy families to join them for a weekend of historic events, lectures and tours August 9-11.

Nelson Rimensnyder challenged the audience with a number of historic questions and provided ‘prizes’ consisting of historic documents, pamphlets and memorabilia from his collections and archives. Nelson’s three questions related to the history of the death penalty in Washington, D.C., the correct answers and those who won are available on the luncheon audio on AOI’s web site.

The Day’s Speaker: [see cover story] Heurich House Museum’s Executive Director, Kimberly Bender, spoke on her research into the history of Myrtilla Miner and the school she established for African American girls on the very site that would later become the Heurich’s house.

The program notes are recorded by John P. Richardson, Secretary and Vice-President Bill Brown.

[AOI’s programs may be heard at <http://www.aoidc.org/aoi-luncheon-audio.html>]

“Myrtilla Miner” (Continued from page 1)

...editor of a newspaper in Rochester, NY, who expressed his skepticism about her mission but wished her well. Myrtilla went to Washington, D.C. in 1851, where she started schools for free black girls in two locations in northwest Washington but faced harassment and threats that made her realize that she must own her own land and build a school that would be safe for herself and the girls. Once she had purchased the three acres now the site of Heurich House, she still faced threats and purchased a revolver, which she practiced shooting in the front yard, on one occasion facing down a gang of toughs by threatening to shoot the first one who showed up at the front door.

One of her students was Emily Edmondson, who had been aboard the “Pearl,” a sailing vessel carrying fleeing slaves that was captured in 1848 and the

slaves sold to the deep South. Emily and her sister survived the experience, their father purchased their freedom, and they returned to Washington, where Emily enrolled in the Myrtilla Miner “Normal School for Colored Girls.” Myrtilla, meanwhile, was developing a wide circle of political and social contacts in Washington, but by the late 1850’s conflicts among the abolitionist community – her principal supporters – weakened fundraising efforts, compounded by an arson attack on the school in 1860. After intermittent openings, Myrtilla closed the school and moved to California in 1861, where she made a sharp turn professionally, becoming a spiritualist and medium claiming contact with the deceased. After a carriage accident from which she never fully recovered, Myrtilla returned to Washington, where she died in 1863.

Although Myrtilla Miner’s own school failed, the sale of Square 115 for \$40,000 after the Civil War created the Miner Fund which funded a series of teaching colleges that in the 20th century became Miner Teachers College and then the University of the District of Columbia. Myrtilla Miner’s courage and vision made an impact that long outlasted her own life.

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AOI Member Georgia Herron with Kimberly Bender. Georgia was a graduate of Miner’s Teachers College and is displaying some of her school regalia.

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AOI’s Newsletters are printed and distributed by:



AOI’s web address is: aoidc.org and our email address is: aioifdc@gmail.com

Please check out our redesigned Home Page and listen to the audio of 2016-2019 luncheon talks by our esteemed guests at www.aoidc.org. And, follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/www.aioifdc.org which may contain more timely events and calls-to-action than our web site

Address Correction Requested

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Jim Embrey 571-436-7774

Luncheon RSVP Voice-mail: 202-342-1865

The AOI is sad to report that Past-President A.L. Wheeler (1995-1997) passed away on July 24, 2019 at the age of 100.



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The Heurich House Museum is the former home of the Historical Society of Washington and served as AOI's headquarters from 1956 until 2003.