



# The Association of the 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***

***Bulletin #96  
April 1, 2011***

## ***President's Message...***

When Deputy Fire Chief John Breen retired from the DC Fire Department in 1978 as Chief of the Fire Training Academy, little did he suspect that he would begin a 'second career' as AOI Board's Representative to the DC Fire Department. For 15 years, John has served as our liaison on matters regarding our historic relationship to the agency, the Friendship Fire Association, the connection between the AOI and the Veteran Volunteers Fire Association and on matters related to AOP's extensive collection of antique fire apparatus and its care.



John progressed through the ranks – he began his career as a Firefighter in 1945 – and prior to his retirement he had also served as Chief of the Fire Prevention Division. Today we are all safer when we ride the Metrorail System due to John's diligence ensuring that Metro's design included sufficient fire-fighting capabilities with standpipes, access and escape routes and with unprecedented multi-jurisdictional cooperation. Prior to his leadership in this realm, he ensured that public space capacities, fire escapes and fire plans met with the approval of the Fire Marshall's Office and DC building codes.

In March, John expressed his desire to pass the torch, so to speak, to someone to succeed him in his role as Fire Department Liaison. Only one AOI member with the experience, knowledge and love of firefighting and its apparatus qualifies: Lt. Jim Embrey (DC FEMS, Ret.).



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## **April's Luncheon Event:**

### **“Abraham Lincoln's Life in Music”**

Elizabeth Smith Brownstein (author, “Lincoln's Other White House”) presents a Musical Performance & Lecture on the Music of Lincoln's Era



### ***Please join us...***

Friday, **April 15**, at the Channel Inn (free Parking) 650 Water Street, SW. (Maine Avenue via Metro Rail Green to Waterfront Station/SEU, Metro Bus 70 or Downtown Circulator Bus), Social Time (cash bar) 11:45 a.m., Luncheon served at 12:30 p.m. (**\$22 per person** - please have checks completed prior to arrival and made payable to “AOI” or bring exact change).

Reservations are a must! Otherwise your food preference may be unavailable. RSVP to our voice mail **202-342-1865**, no later than noon Wed., April 13, 2011.

**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., 4/14, may 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 (Filet of Sole w/Scallops, Seafood Newburg, Chicken, Beef, Veggie Plate or Fruit Plate) and a telephone number where you may be contacted should we have a question or a last-minute cancellation.

## Future Meetings...



The AOI's 145<sup>th</sup> Year – Meeting dates and tentative speakers:

May 20, 2011 – Jim Johnston, “The Loughboroughs of Washington”

June 17, 2011 – Park Ranger Alexa Viets on “Washington’s Circle Fort Parks and the Civil War Sesquicentennial”

Sept. 16, 2011 – TBA

Oct. 21, 2011 – TBA

Nov. 18, 2011 – Dr. Mark Ozer, “Massachusetts Avenue in the Gilded Age”; Annual Election of Officers & Directors

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, the AOI follows the closing schedule of the Arlington County Public Schools or call AOI at 202-342-1865 for last minute information.

## If You Were Not At Our March Meeting...

President Bill Brown opened the second luncheon meeting of 2011 at the Channel Inn Pier 7 Restaurant, to a full house crowd, with 123 members and guests in attendance. Bill wasted no time in moving as quickly as possible through the agenda, in light of 1) the absence of Hilit Taylor, who not only is our Treasurer, but also manages the complex registration process for "getting us through the gate" as rapidly as possible; 2) the large number of people to be served, 3) the need to provide adequate time for our two popular speakers who attracted many of their fans, and 4) to allow time for reminiscence feedback from the audience relating to the talk's "spots."

Bill asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes of our last meeting (Feb 18), as printed in the newsletter. Hearing none, he called for a motion to approve the minutes and dispense with their reading. **Bob Proudley** so moved, with many seconders. The motion was accepted with enthusiasm.

There were 11 new applications for membership. Bill expressed appreciation to those members who were responsible for recruiting the applicants. The applicants are **Grace Heitmuller** (sponsored by Damon Cordon); **Ernie May** (sponsored by Jan Evans Houser); **Joan Topalian** (sponsored by Bobsey Tate); **John L. Sullivan** (resident of Leisure World); **Paul & Cindy Hayes** (Joanne & South Lynn's guest last month); **Martha Mohler** (sponsored by Bernice Watts); **Elizabeth Redmond** (application received by mail); **Maureen Boyle** (sponsored by Barbara and Richard Drechsler); **Harry Davies**; **Lt. Col. Edgar Russell III**, USAF ret. (Sally MacDonald). **Lee Rogers** moved that all applicants be accepted for membership. The motion was seconded by **Bob Barbuto**, and was quickly approved.

Bill introduced first timers, and members with their guests. He made announcements of potential interest to AOI members. This included mention of the forthcoming 2011 Vision Award by the Committee of 100, for a project of benefit to the District. The award will be presented in June.

Bill presented a very brief Treasurer's report, which he had received by phone from Hilit at Sibley Hospital this morning. There are 238 members total. Expenses last month included \$140 for liability insurance for Directors and Officers. Our investment account increased last month by \$2,700. Hilit had mysterious medical problems which required that she go to Sibley for treatment and diagnosis. A get well soon message was placed for member's greetings and signature at the back of our meeting room, to be sent to Hilit, and we fervently pray for her prompt complete recovery.

Bill said that he had received numerous complements on the quality of the minutes, and he commended Secretary Seymour Selig for this, to the approval of the members present. President Brown subsequently reminded the Secretary that this information should be included in the minutes.

Our speakers today are **Douglas E. Evelyn** and **Paul Dickson**, coauthors of "On This Spot: Pinpointing the Past in Washington, D.C.," both are AOI members, although Doug now lives in New Hampshire. Doug was formerly a high Smithsonian official (retiring after 36 years service), and also a Trustee of the Historical Society of Washington, and is a coauthor of "Scholarship In Museums: Roles and Responsibilities." Paul Dickson is an active writer, and has made presentations to AOI on some his work before, including his book "The Bonus Army" coauthored with Tom Allen. He has written more than 45 nonfiction books and very many magazine articles.

Doug and Paul met when they were both students at Wesleyan University, and came to Washington in the 1960's. They both developed intense interest Washington history. Doug explained how he was driving by Tenley Circle in 1988, when he noticed a small house that seemed out of place there, and he got to wondering what and why it was there. He and Paul then started working on a manuscript about various DC places and what happened there "on this spot," which led in 1992 to the first edition of their book. The book was very well received, and has become a standard reference, now in its fourth edition. Doug mentioned the names of many people who helped them with their research in the beginning and over

the years, and emphasized the importance of such contributions.

Doug explained some of the unique features of the book and how it is organized; for instance, the Washington timeline, the photographs and their captions, the maps, the sidebars, as well as the site write-ups. He explained how the timeline has grown, and noted that it has been revised in the different editions. While Doug spoke of their book's layout and format, he called upon Paul to speak of individual stories and events. This Paul proceeded to do with delightful relish, pointing out that his world was the one peopled by bartenders, prostitutes, ne'er-do-well-do-wells, and other off-beat characters--- even body snatchers who provided cadavers for medical schools (they termed themselves "resurrectionists)." His rollicking humor had everyone chuckling and anxious to contribute to the discussion. Doug pointed out that when the Smithsonian American Indian Museum was getting underway he and AOI member Amy Ballard were researching the museum site together, with other Smithsonian people who had to prepare architectural plans. They learned that the site was the location for a business venture of the well known Washington entrepreneur (read Madam) Mary Hall. Archeological excavation brought forth evidence of the fine wines and dining that took place on the site, which was regarded as one of the outstanding and most exclusive bordellos on the East Coast. Doug pointed out that she was a good business woman, paid taxes, owned well managed properties, and has a marker in Congressional Cemetery that is far more dignified than those of many of her clients. Knowledgeable local history expert and AOI member Vicky Schwartz nicely added that Mary Hall was important in Arlington history also. Vicky lives in Hall's Hill in Arlington, near Marymount University. She said that Mary Hall's brother was Basil Hall, who was a prominent Virginian. Mary Hall's summer house was where the main house of Marymount is located, and is where the nuns live. Doug further mentioned that there was an urban history to the Mall which was not well known, but which is significant for Washington history, and that Mary Hall was an important contributor to that urban history.

Other topics briefly discussed by Paul and Doug included the Armory Hospital for Civil War soldiers, the railroad lines on the Mall (ably assisted by Lee Rogers who was called upon to fill in on downtown railroad history, both pre and post Civil War), the US Fish Commission and its role in breeding and propagating fish species for food in the Western states, the old Otis elevator in Litwin's furniture store, Evelyn Walsh Mclean and the Hope Diamond and it's curse, the new Atlas theater district in Northeast, Coxey's army, the Bonus Army March on Washington, the role of Eisenhower in that and in the establishment of the US interstate road network after becoming President.

This was another thoroughly enjoyable educational event, and we are grateful for the privilege of seeing and hearing these wonderful distinguished authors.

Respectfully submitted.

*Seymour Selig*, Secretary

### ***President's Message (Cont'd)...***

For years now, Jim has been AOI's go-to person regarding our apparatus collection: coordinating the appearance of our 1905 steam pumper and ensuring through our Memorandum of Understanding with DCFEMS the safe and secure storage of our antique equipment. As an 'apparatus lover' Jim probably knows more about the history of the Department's apparatus, its assignment and station equipment complements than anyone alive. Today, he also serves as President of the Friendship Fire Association which not only provides the Canteen Services at working fires but also maintains an extensive museum of DC Fire Department memorabilia on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Engine No. 3 on New Jersey Avenue, NW. We welcome Jim to his new role as AOI's Fire Department Liaison.

### ***Saying their names, telling their stories...***

...at Walter Pierce Community Park, Saturday, April 16<sup>th</sup> from 11am to 1pm to speak the names and tell the stories of 8,428 people buried in the African American & Quaker cemeteries in Adams Morgan. Meet at the park just east of Rock Creek & Duke Ellington Bridge, between Calvert Street and Adams Mill Road. Further info: Mary Belcher at 202-462-9069.

### ***Committee of 100's 2011 Vision Awards...***

...nomination deadline April 15<sup>th</sup>. Awarded for a project, program or formal plan that has been developed to benefit D.C. as a whole and which can serve as an exemplary neighborhood achievement to be duplicated in other areas of the city. Nomination form is on-line at: [www.committee100.net](http://www.committee100.net). The award ceremony will be held Wed., June 1<sup>st</sup> at 6:30pm at the Belmont Mansion, 1618 New Hampshire Ave., NW.

### ***AOI Member offers this matching quiz:***

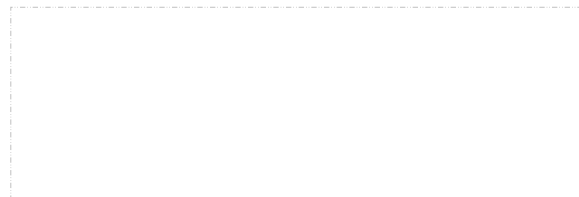
Member Neil Gilbert (Davis, CA) created the following quiz (match correct letter to number):

- |                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Hysongs           | a. Coffee           |
| 2. Vellati's         | b. Laundry          |
| 3. Cherry Smash      | c. Pretty Bitter... |
| 4. M.E. Swing        | d. Good Food        |
| 5. Columbia Tea Room | e. On PA Ave.       |
| 6. Holmes to Homes   | f. Medicine         |
| 7. Watkins           | g. Popular Drink    |
| 8. Bergman's         | h. Funeral Home     |
| 9. Circle Theatre    | i. Caramels         |
| 10. Senate Beer      | j. Bread Delivered  |

(Answers: 1h; 2i; 3g; 4a; 5d; 6j; 7f; 8b; 9e; 10c)

*Address Correction Requested*

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◆ Help keep AOI alive and strong: invite friends to join and be sure to renew your membership!  
◆ Visit the Historical Society and Kiplinger Research Library at the Historic Carnegie Building.  
[www.historydc.org](http://www.historydc.org). Library hours: Tue-Sat, 10-5



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