



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

April 2024 / Bulletin 181

Join us for the next AOI of DC Luncheon Event!

**Thursday,
April 18, 2024**

The Siege of Washington:

The Untold Story of Twelve Days that Shook the Union with John Lockwood

**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 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. Please add "April 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 March Luncheon ...

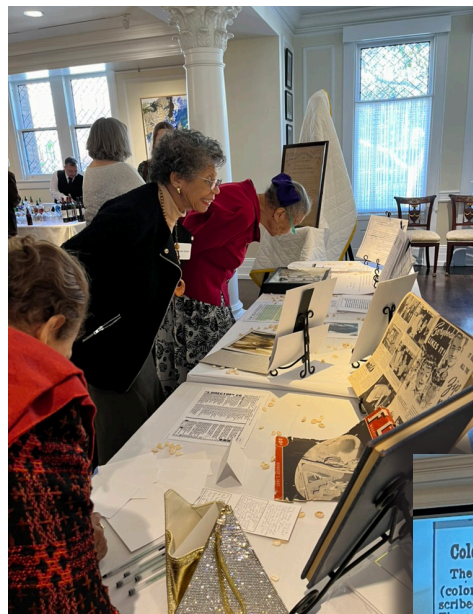
Over 70 members and guests filled the room for our March lunch presentation, which focussed on AOI's own complicated history. Introductory announcements included:

- ❖ The 50th Anniversary DC History Conference runs from April 4-6 at the Martin Luther King Jr. Library, including numerous events and talks, as well as the History Network, a resource center of DC history organizations – including AOI;
- ❖ *Collecting DC History* will take place April 21st (see full info on p. 2);
- ❖ Please renew your AOI membership – we're up to 68% renewals so far! You can renew online at our [website](#) or by mail.

Our March presentation featured AOI Past-President **Bill Brown** and board member **Sherri Sewall** retracing how a mystery of AOI's history was solved, and encompassing Sherri's own family history in the process. Although the curiously identical articles of incorporation of both AOI of DC and its segregated sibling,

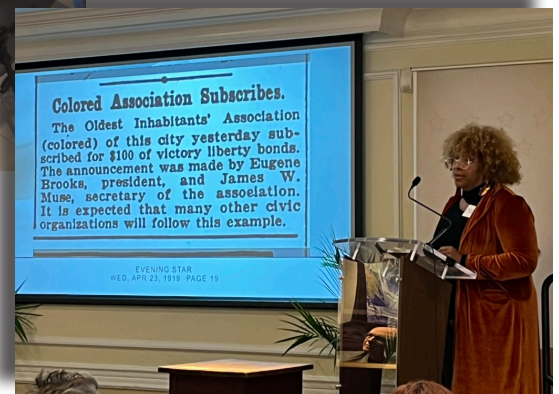
the Association of Oldest Inhabitants-Colored, had long been a subject of fruitless investigation for Bill and AOI historian Nelson Rimensnyder (among others), it was the serendipitous discovery in 2011 of the files of AOI-Colored's last president, William D. Nixon, that finally brought the organization's detailed history to light. But what about those identical charters? Sherri

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Above: Lunch attendees check out the display of artifacts and memorabilia.

Right: Sherri Sewall led us through the interconnected history of the Sewall family and the Association of Oldest Inhabitants-Colored.





2024 Board of Directors

Officers:

Cindy Gueli, President
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 Carolyn Michell, Treasurer
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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

E-mail: aioifdc@gmail.com

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

Follow us on Facebook: 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 March Luncheon, continued from page 1

then picked up the story – as a new AOI member in 2022, she brought forth family artifacts linking her great-grandfather, George Sewall, to AOI-Colored’s first president, Jerome Johnson (husband of George’s sister Glovina) ... and to his father, none other than John Bond Blake, AOI’s second president in 1868! Mystery solved – George and Jerome provided the impetus for a group of



Black Washingtonians to form an organization in 1912 similar to the one their father/father-in-law helped found in 1865 but that had not been welcoming of them. An AOI board resolution formally welcoming descendants of the long-since defunct AOI-Colored into AOI brought the story full circle; see the AOI website for the resolution’s full text.

View the video of the full March luncheon meeting on the AOI website at www.aoidc.org/aoi-luncheon-recordings.html.



Don't miss **Collecting DC History**, jointly sponsored by AOI and the Heurich House Museum, on Sunday, April 21st. Archives preserve stories and collect objects so that history can be accessible to everyone. DC’s history archives will provide advice on how to donate and preserve your items and stories for future generations. Become part of preserving our city’s history – bring photos of your treasures, objects, and heirlooms to share. (For the safety of your items, please do **not** bring physical objects.) Meet with experts from DC’s cultural institutions and take part in preserving DC history! This FREE event will take place rain or shine at the Heurich House Museum Garden – RSVP at bit.ly/collectingdc.

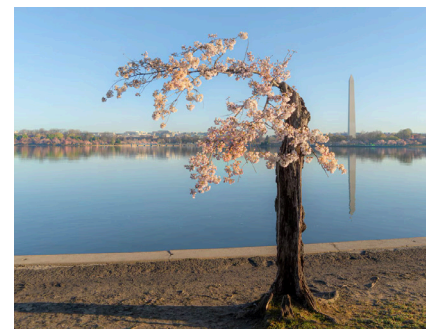


Peak bloom may have blossomed early, but this year’s **National Cherry Blossom Festival** still featured a host of events across the city from March 20th through April 14th, culminating in the annual Cherry Blossom Parade on April 13th. Check out nationalcherry-blossomfestival.org for a recap of all the events from our city’s signature cultural extravaganza!

Right: The tenacious “Stumpy” will be one of the 50 Japanese cherry trees removed after this year’s festival for the long-coming reconstruction of the Tidal Basin seawall. Don’t worry – cuttings from the tree will be among the new trees planted after the project’s completion. (photo: Kevin Ambrose/Washington Post)



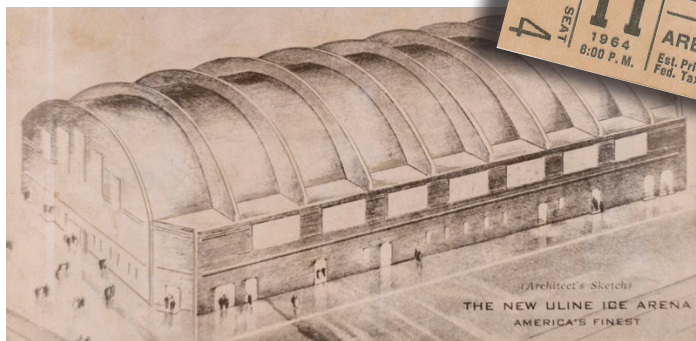
Above: Sherri Sewall & Bill Brown announce the ceremonial resolution officially welcoming and incorporating descendants of the Association of Oldest Inhabitants–Colored into the AOI of DC.



Other News ...

Downtown DC got a reprieve on March 27th when Mayor Bowser and Ted Leonsis inked a deal to keep the Wizards and Capitals at the **Capital One Arena** at Gallery Place through 2050. Part of the agreement included \$515 million of city funding to renovate the arena, which became a catalyst for the rejuvenation of the 7th St. commercial corridor when opened in 1997, bringing the Washington sports teams back to the District from suburban Maryland, though also gentrifying much of the city's historic Chinatown.

Long before Capital One Arena (aka Verizon Center, aka MCI Center), though, the city had another significant venue for sports and events – the **Uline Arena** (later the



Above: Artist redenering of the \$515M renovations planned for the Capital One Arena. (Monumental Sports)

Left: Original 1941 architect's drawing of "the New Uline Ice Arena"; Beatles ticket stub from 1964.

Washington Coliseum). Built in 1941 at 3rd and M Sts. NE, the Coliseum hosted various DC hockey and basketball teams through the early 1970s, and is perhaps best remembered as the site of the Beatles' first U.S. concert in 1964. Falling into disrepair after being supplanted by other more modern venues, the Coliseum housed various other functions over the years before its adaptive reuse by outdoors retail giant REI in 2016 for their DC flagship store.

About Our Members

From Earl P. Williams, Jr., Washington, DC:

Born in Georgetown, I originally lived in rural PG County – my father was a night-shift pressman at the U.S. Government Printing Office, and my mother was a cook and baker at Lansburgh's Department Store. We moved to the Eckington neighborhood of DC in the early 1950s, one block west of the "plow pit" of Capitol Transit's No. 82 streetcar line. When we moved to an apartment at 19th St. & Mintwood Place in 1954, we were the only Afro-American family in our neighborhood. Moving to the upscale, predominantly white Kalorama Triangle was a turning point in my life. The difference between it and where I lived before was like night and day. An unknown consequence of my family's move put me in the forefront of DC's school desegregation efforts. Enrolling in the all-white James F. Oyster ES in 1955, I was in the first handful of black pupils to desegregate Oyster School. I received an Ivy League education at Oyster, where I was introduced to children from other nations, military "brats," and children of DC officials. I attended Gordon Jr. HS in Georgetown, St. John's College HS, and the Univ. of Maryland, College Park, receiving a BA in American history in 1973. I settled down as an editor at the U.S. General Accounting Office from 1976 to retirement in 2005. I am the author of *Amtrak's Washington-New York Corridor: A Brief History*; *What You*

Should Know About the American Flag; and *Francis Hopkinson: Father of Our Flag and Much More!*. I have written numerous articles and given lectures on the origin of the U.S. flag (including AOI in 2016), and my research has convinced historians that Francis Hopkinson did design the Stars and Stripes. A member of AOI since 2014, I played the five-string banjo in the Earl Williams Bluegrass Band while at the UMD, and was a member of the Second-String Bluegrass Band.

For the full version of Earl's story plus past stories, check out the AOI's [Members' Stories](#) web page. To contribute your story, please send it to our AOI email address (aoiofdc@gmail.com) and we will compile it for our archives, as well as feature excerpts in upcoming AOI newsletters.

In Memoriam ...

AOI notes the passing of member **Mary Pett** this past December. A Rhode Island native, Mary's independent spirit led to a trailblazing life, with significant achievements in her years at the Civil Aeronautics Board, DOT, and State Dept. A Washingtonian for the past 60 years, Mary leaves behind her partner since 2013, Bill Wildprett, and is interred in Arlington Cemetery with her husband of 27 years, John Eiland.

Address Correction Requested

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

c/o 815 Woodside Parkway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Mark Your Calendar...

Upcoming AOI meeting dates and tentative speakers:

- 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
- Thurs. July 18 – *Memories & Mimosas Brunch: Summer of 1968* (11:00 AM - 2:00 PM)

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. Regular monthly lunch meetings (Feb.-June, Sept.-Nov.) run from 11:30 AM - 2:00 PM unless otherwise noted.

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



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.