



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 #160
November 2019*

“Was There an Underground Railroad in Washington, D.C.?”

By John Richardson

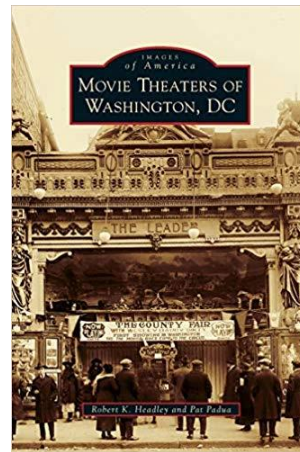
The National Park Service’s National Capital Region’s veteran Jenny Masur spoke to the AOI luncheon October 18 on “Heroes of the Underground Railroad in Washington, D.C.,” the subject of her recently-published book on the same subject. Ms. Masur pointed out that Washington was a hub of the underground railroad (UGRR), not only a destination where fleeing blacks could hide within Washington’s substantial free black population but also a way station on the way north as well as a starting point for enslaved blacks working or living in the District.

Until emancipation of its slaves in 1862, the District was a slave city, pinned between two slaveholding states (Maryland and Virginia) and controlled by Congress, which was itself dominated by the “slaveocracy,” along with the Presidency and the Supreme Court. Slave coffles shuffled through Washington streets in chains, and enslaved blacks worked in hotels and restaurants, either for their owners or hired out by their owners as cheap labor. Until retrocession of the Virginia portion of the District of Columbia in 1846-47, slave traders had made “Alexandria, D.C.” the largest merchandiser of slaves in the South. Congress gave itself the luxury of not having to accept or listen to abolitionist petitions by imposing a “gag rule” from 1836-1844 that prohibited reading or discussion of such petitions on the House floor.

(Cont’d. page 3)

November’s Luncheon Event:

**“Movie Theaters of Washington, D.C.”
with Robert Headley and Pat Padua**



Please join us...

Friday, Nov. 15, 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., Nov. 12, 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., 11/14, 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:

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

Feb. 20, 2020 – TBA

March 20, 2020 -- Richard Reyes-Gavilan, Executive Director of the DC Public Library

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...

Conference

The Association of Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia (AOI) held the seventh luncheon meeting of its 154th year at the Capitol Skyline Hotel at noon Friday, October 18, 2019 with 73 members and guests present. **President Jan Evans** welcomed everyone, expressing her appreciation for those attending and for inviting guests and potential new members. **Vice-President Bill Brown** conducted the business meeting. He called for approval of the notes of the September meeting, which were printed in the current newsletter. With no corrections or additions upon a motion made by **Barbara Ioanes** and seconded by **Maggie Hobbs**, the notes were approved and their reading waived.

New Members: There was one member application for consideration: **Patricia Richards** (past guest of member Vicky Crawford). The new member was approved upon a motion, seconded by **Darwina Neal** and **John Cady**.

Treasurer's Report: Hulit Taylor

Membership

- We now have 320 members, 20 of whom joined this year.
- We are always interested in having people join our organization, so please spread the word to your friends and acquaintances.
- Membership brochures are on the side table and at the registration desk – take a supply!

Non-Routine Expenses Since the September Luncheon

- \$500 grant to the Historical Society of Washington for the annual Historic Studies

Luncheon Report

- 74 Attended our September luncheon
- Once again, our thanks to those who paid for the luncheon even though they were unable to attend and missed the cancellation deadline.

Vice-President Brown welcomed everyone on the Officers' & Directors' behalf and in addition to spouses and family members: **Tom Buckingham** had with him **Becky Morris**; **Sallybeth Bumbrey** had with her **Angela Dickey**, **Daphney Titus** and **Terry Walz**; **Gayle George** had a number of guests with her: **Lucy Armstrong**, **Barbara Curtis**, **Sandy & Barry Harrelson** and **Mary Penn-Beveney**; **Ane Powers** had **Jeanette Mobley** and **Larry Ray** with her; **Theresa Saxton** had **Lisa Leone** with her and **Dick & Beryl West** had **Kim Small**, their daughter, as their guest.

Brief Announcements: First, we were saddened to lose long-time member Kathryn (Kay) Eckles recently. Kay was 101. Second, with Director **Maggie Hobb's** persistence, we are moving closer to recognizing the World War I nurse and Navy Yeoman buried at Congressional Cemetery who are in unmarked graves. Maggie has work with the cemetery staff and has ordered two granite memorial markers for these two veterans of WWI which the AOI will pay for as the Veterans Administration was unwilling to recognize or acknowledge their service. While installation will be after Veterans Day, we'll be sure to schedule an unveiling/dedication ceremony probably sometime in the spring of 2020.

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

questions related to early automobile registration in the District and a move by Del. Norton to have a Civil War sympathizer's statue removed from the Judiciary Square area. 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] Member and author **Jenny Masur** served for seventeen years with the National Park Service as the National Capital Region's manager for the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. Her talk today was "Heroes of the Underground Railroad around Washington, D.C."

Program recap provided by Vice-President Bill Brown.

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

"Underground Railroad" (Continued from page 1)

Washington was a part of the Upper South, with water and land access to relatively nearby northern states, particularly Pennsylvania, on the northern side of the Mason-Dixon Line, many of whose residents, particularly Philadelphia Quakers, participated in UGRR support to slaves fleeing from further South. The slaveocracy made strenuous efforts to curtail UGRR activities legally as well as through vigilantism; the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act made it a crime to assist fleeing slaves until its repeal in 1864. In Washington, courageous blacks like Leonard Grimes were part of the UGRR. Grimes, born in Leesburg, worked as a hack driver in Washington and helped slaves to escape before he moved to Boston, became a minister, and expanded his work in the abolitionist cause. William Boyd, an Irish immigrant in Washington, sold medicinal herbs from a wagon with a false back where he hid escaping slaves. He was captured and arrested near the Pennsylvania border with a married slave couple and sentenced to jail in Washington, where he was pardoned in 1861 by President Lincoln. Ms. Masur recounted the individual stories of a number of other whites and blacks, free and enslaved, who helped thwart the "slaveocracy" by supporting the drive for freedom by enslaved blacks in, into, and out of the District of Columbia in the years before the Civil War.

Ms. Masur said that while substantial research information can be found in newspaper accounts, court records, as well as in private collections, it is still a challenge because of inadequate documentation of most slaves' personal histories. The stories of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman are well known, as are dramatic incidents like the attempted escape of "The Pearl" with a load of fleeing slaves down the Potomac

River in 1848, but a great deal still needs to be done to document the courageous efforts of blacks and whites alike to help enslaved blacks escape the bonds of slavery.



Report of the Nominating Committee

October 3, 2019

Dear President Evans:

The Nominating Committee has proposed Officers for the coming year and the Directors for 2020-2021. The nominees have agreed to serve if elected:

Officers (1 year terms):

- President Thomas Neale
- Vice-President Jan A.K. Evans
- Treasurer Hulit Taylor (incumbent)
- Secretary John P. Richardson (incumbent)
- Historian Nelson Rimensnyder (incumbent)

Directors:

- Margaret (Maggie) Hobbs 2020-2021
- Jessica Hodge 2020-2021
- Gary Scott 2020-2021

The following Directors do not require re-election as they have not yet completed their two-year terms:

- Barbara Bates Thru 2020
- William N. Brown (unexp. term) Thru 2020
- Carl Cole Thru 2020

The members of the Nominating Committee hope this slate of nominees will meet with the approval of the membership.

Sincerely yours,

Barbara Drechsler, M. Jean Lockard & Richard Drechsler



AOI's Newsletters are printed and distributed by:



AOI's web address is: aoifdc.org and our email address is: aoiofdc@gmail.com

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

Address Correction Requested

The Association of Oldest Inhabitants
of the District of Columbia
4425 Greenwich Parkway, NW
District of Columbia 20007-2010

Officers:

Jan A. K. Evans, President 301-968-4749
William N. Brown, Vice-President 202-342-1638
John P. Richardson, Secretary 703-534-3577
Hulit Pressley Taylor, Treasurer 202-625-0203
Nelson Rimensnyder, Historian 202-546-4668

Fire Department Liaison:

Jim Embrey 571-436-7774

Luncheon RSVP Voice-mail: 202-342-1865

This Historical Society of Washington, D.C., and Washington History Center are now open Tues. thru Sat. 10am-5pm at the Carnegie Library.



Its Kiplinger Researcher Library is open by appointment, Tues.-Fri., 10-4. Visit dchistory.org for exhibit hours or to make an appointment to conduct research.

Directors:

Barbara Bates 202-244-2090
Carl Cole 202-889-8813
Margaret (Maggie) Hobbs 202-547-0964
Jessica Hodge 301-704-5133
Thomas Neale 202-333-6946
Gary Scott 202-544-4862



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