



# 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 #82  
October 3, 2008***

## ***Historian's Message...***

The John A. Wilson (District) Building is located on Square 255 as designated by the original plan of the city. Prior to its construction in 1908, various owners occupied the lots on this site including stables owned by the prominent Nailors, Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Stoddard and a Capital Traction Company power plant.

Congress passed the Public Building Act in 1902 appropriating \$550,000 to acquire square 255 and \$1.5mil for constructing a building. Following a design competition, the Philadelphia firm of Cope & Stewardson was selected for its Beaux Arts Palladian Revival design based on the architectural style of Italian architect Andrea Palladio (1508-1580).

Eventually, Federal Government plans for the site threatened the building and in a 1931 editorial in the *Washington Herald* said, in part, "The District Building is one of the most attractive and majestic structures in the Nation's Capital. It would be a useless waste and extravagance to demolish this building."

Over the years, as tenants came and went the interior was altered to suit various needs, including quartering soldier during World War II.

Learn more about this Historic Landmark on Wed., Oct. 15 beginning at 10am as the city celebrates the District Building's centennial.

***Nelson Rimensnyder***



## **October's Luncheon Event:**

### **Edwin C. Bearss, Historian Emeritus of the National Park Service**

**Will recount and discuss his favorite heritage sites and some of the memorable tours and patrons he has encountered during his more than 40-years of service**

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

for our Luncheon Meeting on Friday, October 17, 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. (\$20 per person - please have checks completed and payable to AAOI@), concurrent with our Business Meeting and followed by our Feature Presentation.

Reservations are a must! Otherwise your food preference may be unavailable. RSVP to the Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

**202-383-1813, no later than noon Wed., Oct. 15, 2008.**

**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., 10/16, may result in you being charged.

Please be prepared to leave your name, the number in your party, your guest's names, your meal preferences (Fish, Seafood Newburg, Chicken, Beef, Veggie Plate or Fruit Plate) and a telephone number where you may be contacted should we have a question or last-minute cancellation.

## Future Meetings...

The AOI's 143<sup>rd</sup> Year B Meeting dates and tentative speakers:

- Nov. 21, 2008 – Noted Historian Dr. C.R. Gibbs: “Black Explorers”; Annual Election of Officers & Directors
- Jan. 1, 2009 – AOI's Annual New Year's Day Reception, Noon until 2pm at the Pier 7/Channel Inn
- Feb. 20, 2009 – Reminiscences kicked-off by Bob Levey, former columnist for the *Washington Post*.
- March 20, 2009 – Historian Kenneth Bowling presents: “Peter Charles L'Enfant: The Man Behind the Plan”
- April 17, 2009 – Architectural Historian Don Hawkins presents: “L'Enfant: The Plan”
- May 15, 2009 – “Historic Blair House” presented by Curator Candace Shireman
- June 19, 2009 – Former AOI Vice-present and retired DC Police Chief Ernest Brown (1876-1966) will ‘return’ to this month's AOI luncheon to reminisce about his years on the police department.

NOTE: All meeting subjects and speakers have been invited to appear, but nevertheless are tentative. If our published RSVP line (202-383-1813) 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 HSW at 202-383-1813 for last minute information.

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## If You Were Not At Our Sept. 2008 Meeting...

President Bill Brown opened the luncheon meeting, at Pier 7 restaurant in the Channel Inn. He noted that this was the sixth luncheon in AOI's 143<sup>rd</sup> year. There were 87 members and guests in attendance.

The regular speaker format was varied slightly in order to first permit a presentation by **Sandy Bellamy**, new Executive Director of the Historical Society of Washington, who had to be in Baltimore at 2pm. She gave us an update on recent progress at HSW including a partnership with the DC public school system to establish a curriculum for DC history for grades K-12. She described the new exhibits and galleries that have been opened. She ended her remarks with a plea for continued support for the efforts from AOI.

The agenda then reverted to regular business matters. Minutes of the June meeting, which were provided, were unanimously approved.

John Daly presented the names of three new applicants for membership. They are **Lucinda Treat**, nominated by John Daly, **Fr. Malcolm Willoughby**, and **John Davis**, nominated by Margaret Miller. A motion to accept the applicants as new members was offered by Alan Beach, seconded Ellen Nesheim and approved.

Bill welcomed by name new members, first timers, returning old timers who have missed a few meetings, and guests and

their hosts.

President Brown presented a brief treasurer's report in our Treasurer's absence and provided information of events of interest. Included was that the Military Road School Preservation Trust/Black Heritage Society Kinston, NC will have their awards banquet at Gallaudet University on Oct 25th. AOI has been invited and will be recognized, among others, for its “Legacy of Educational Excellence.” AOI members wishing to attend should see Bill for further information and reservation form.

Historian **Nelson Rimensnyder** challenged us to recall what *Washingtonian* ran for Vice-President of the U.S. on a third party ticket in 1972. It was Julius Hobson. Nelson displayed a campaign button from 1972 for Benjamin Spock and Julius Hobson running as candidates for the Peoples Party!

The focus of today's program is member reminiscences. Bill recalled his own recollection of the Carnegie library building when it was part of the newly created Federal City College, which was the predecessor of the University of the District of Columbia and how a Western High School classmate of his was able to transfer to Federal City College, and became its first graduate... in a class by himself.

**Lee Rogers** presented an abstract on Belva Ann Lockwood. She moved to Washington in 1866. Despite the obstacles she managed to get through the challenges of getting a legal education, having it recognized, and being permitted to practice. In 1884 the California office of the Equal Rights Party nominated her as the first woman to run for President.

**John Daly** served as emcee for the members' personal reminiscences as **Jack Ihrie** spoke of his adventures in getting his book of drawings published in China, and other unusual events. **Carolivia Herron** updated us on the progress of the libretto she has been commissioned to write by the Washington National Opera and composer Bruce Adolphe. With the assistance of an AOI member, Carolivia feels that the story of Marion Anderson's banned performance may be more complex than originally described, and that the DAR may have been blamed unfairly for discrimination not of their making. The opera will be performed in March.

**Al Wheeler** reminisced about his 64 years in Washington; **Joe Grano** recalled his early days in Washington, the efforts to save historic Rhodes Tavern, praising such civic activists as Anne Sellin, Kay Eckles and Harriet Hubbard; **Cynthia Brock-Smith**, secretary to the DC Council, told us more about the Wilson Building centennial festivities to be held Oct. 15th; member **Steve Hogleund** referred us to the web site Flickr. It has many local photos, is searchable by neighborhood, and is a lot of fun and a real treasure trove. It's at [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com). Steve volunteered to give further info by email: [hogleundst@aol.com](mailto:hogleundst@aol.com); and, **Sally McDonald** delighted us with anecdotes of being born at Walter Reed Medical Center because her mother (Sarah McClenden) was an Army Officer assigned to the Pentagon rather than a military dependant, thus ruffling some bureaucratic feathers while being wheeled into labor.

It was a full and enjoyable meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
**Seymour Selig**

\* Seymour's more complete minutes are available in our archives and on our website.

Please visit us at our web site at <http://www.aoidc.org> or simply **AGoogle@** Governor Shepherd and we'll pop-up!

Our e-mail address is: [aoidc@verizon.net](mailto:aoidc@verizon.net)

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## ***2009 Marks the Centennial of Peter Charles L'Enfant's Re-interment at Arlington Cemetery...***

AOI plans to celebrate this centennial by gearing several of our luncheon events toward the life of the architect of the Nation's Capital. Author Ken Bowling will present a program on the life of L'Enfant at our March 20<sup>th</sup> luncheon and Architectural Historian Don Hawkins will present his study on how and why he believes L'Enfant designed the city we know it today.

## ***AOI Launches its "Sesquicentennial Project"...***

Several times monthly, I receive inquiries – usually via our website – from descendants of Washingtonians who believe their ancestors were members of the AOI and would like additional information. While our archives are rather extensive (nearly 20 cubic feet in 22 containers) and well organized by member Elinor Martin (deceased), it is difficult to locate any one individual in the files without first knowing the time-frame they were a member and then manually searching the files (membership applications & certificates, obituaries, biographies, mentions in meeting minutes, etc.). When records are found, I usually photocopy them and mail them to the requestor (who is always *very* grateful). At our September Board meeting, the Directors moved that we consider an hourly rate or service charge for conducting such research (even though I 'donate' my time to do it now, that might not always be the case...) and supported my proposal to begin creating and maintaining a computerized name index of all individuals who have been members of the AOI during its near 144 history. The goal is to have this project completed by AOI's Sesquicentennial, December 7, 2015. As envisioned, each occurrence of a member's name would be recorded (together with their date/place of birth/death, Archive Container/Folder Number and brief comment. Upon completion, the index would be accessible via the Historical Society's Kiplinger Library website or AOI's website. Further it would provide the research librarians at Kiplinger the ability to answer questions and direct researchers to numerous locations within AOI's archives for an 'inquiry,' something they do not have the time to research, manually, today.

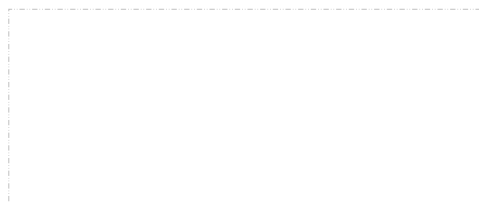
I plan to use some of my 'volunteer' time at the HSW to begin the indexing project and the Board will then determine if the work should be carried on via interns, volunteers or paid 'contractors.'

We plan to keep the membership informed as to the progress of this project.

*Bill Brown, President*

*Address Correction Requested*

The Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of D.C.  
4425 Greenwich Parkway, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20007-2010



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**Officers:**

William Brown, President 202-342-1638  
4425 Greenwich Parkway, NW, Wash., DC 20007  
John Gill, Sr., Vice-president 202-338-5001  
Seymour M. Selig, Secretary 301-292-1054  
Hulit Pressley Taylor, Treasurer 202-625-0203  
Nelson Rimensnyder, Historian 202-546-4668  
John Breen, F.D. Liaison 301-586-8866

**Past Presidents:**

A. L. Wheeler 202-337-3177  
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**Directors:**

Carl Cole 202-889-8813  
John Jay Daly 301-951-9110  
James Gaffney 202-363-6688  
Jan Evans Houser 202-234-6251  
John P. Richardson 703-534-3577  
Sherwood Smith 202-686-4107

-- Help keep AOI alive and growing: invite a friend to join!  
-- October 15, 2008 set for the District Building's centennial celebrations. Events begin at 10am!  
-- The exhibits, book shop and café at the HSW are now open Tuesday thru Sunday!



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