



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 #90
March 5, 2010*

President's Message...

AOI's charter reads, in part, "to keep alive the reminiscences of the past, and the social and paternal communications of the present and future." While AOI's original members charged their "Chronicler" with recording day-to-day observations for posterity, the task was more formal and publicly available when *Cleveland Leader* journalist Frank G. Carpenter published his observations of Washington life in the early 1880's as "Carp's Washington." About the same time another correspondent signed himself, "The Idler." Since then many journalists have written of our city, its politicians, diplomatic corps, weather and scandals including AOI member Mary Matson's Grandfather John Clagett Proctor better known as "The Rambler" who fulfilled this mission from the late 20s to early 40s. During our last half century (or perhaps a little less...) Bob Levey and his successor John Kelly have provided...



Former *Washington Post* columnist Bob Levey (11/19/2009)



Current *Washington Post* Columnist John Kelly (2/19/2010)

...their own observations of Washington life and have raised millions for local charities, too.

Bill Brown

March's Luncheon Event:

The Cherry Blossom Festival and Trees, Celebrating Courage and Friendship

Presented by Ann McClellan



Please join us...

Friday, **March 19th**, 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. (\$21 per person - please have checks completed prior to arrival and made payable to AAOI@ 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., Mar. 17, 2010.

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., 3/18, 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.

>>>Note: We have had to re-price our luncheon to \$21 per person. Please bring exact payment!<<<

Future Meetings...

The AOI's 144th Year B Meeting dates and tentative speakers:

- April 16, 2010 – Dr. Mark Ozer: “Washington DC – Politics and Place”
- May 21, 2010 – Female Re-enactors of Distinction (FREED) with Patricia Tyson, Theresa Saxton & Friends
- June 18, 2010 – Dr. Joseph Browne and William Gilcher: Adolf Cluss and the Washington Barracks (Ft. McNair)
- July 4, 2010 – Annual Palisades Fourth of July Parade. Meet in front of Eng. Co. 29 (MacArthur/Whitehaven) at 10:30am to walk with AOI's 1905 American La France Steam Pumper
- Sept. 17, 2010 – Reminiscences kicked-off by Lee Rogers with a slide presentation from the Truax Collection
- Oct. 15, 2010 – John Richardson presents, “How Alexander Shepherd Saved the District”
- Nov. 19, 2010 – To Be Announced; Annual Election of Officers and 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 Feb. 2010 Meeting...

The first luncheon meeting for 2010 was held at the Channel Inn on February 19. President Bill Brown presided while we were still recovering from the record snows of the Blizzard of 2010, which had forced the postponement of the Board meeting scheduled for this past Monday. (The Board will meet after today's luncheon event). The attendance for today is 102 members and guests.

Minutes of the November meeting were placed at each table for review, since there has not been a newsletter since that meeting. A motion to accept the minutes as thus distributed was offered by **Kay Eckles**, seconded by **Bob Proudley**. The motion was approved.

A special election was held to fill the Director vacancy created by the recent passing of **Jim Gaffney**. The Board has recommended that **Damon Cordon** be selected for this position to fill the unexpired portion of the term. A motion was offered by **Mary-Pat Gaffney**, seconded by **Ray Ruppert**, to accomplish this and was approved without opposition. Bill welcomed Damon to the Board.

There have been new applications for membership since the last meeting. The following applications were submitted: **Ambassador Gordon Brown** (nominated by Nola Klamberg); **Maurice Fitzgerald** (nominated by Mary Brown); **Timothy J. Gorman** (John Daly's brother-in-law); **Catherine Ball** (nominated by Mary Matson); **Nancye Suggs** (nominated by Sally MacDonald); **Carroll Green** (nominated by Al Wheeler); **Helen Anderson** (nominated by Hulit Taylor); **Eric Cox** (nominated by Sally MacDonald); **Beverley Barnett** (nominated by Mary Brown); **Margaret D. Hobbs** (nominated by Cindy Janke). A motion to accept into membership was made by **Lee Rogers**, seconded by **Carl Cole**, and approved without opposition.

Bill mentioned the passing of Director **Jim Gaffney** and also **Forrest Rabenhorst**. Bill introduced first timers and guests.

Bill discussed how Historian **Nelson Rimensnyder** has taken on a cause of researching information and records of the Association of Oldest Inhabitants (Colored) Inc. AOICI was an organization founded in DC in 1916, and existed into the 1970's until it ceased activity. [See accompanying article on page 3] Nelson mentioned that in his reading he found an article in an Anacostia neighborhood museum publication describing an effort to influence George Preston Marshall to hire black football players for the Washington Redskins. This campaign was initiated by AOICI, which pressed the issue for ten years. Nelson confirmed this by newspaper articles of the period at the Library of Congress. Nelson also noted that the monthly dues for AOICI were raised ten cents, to the sum of 25 cents in 1959.

Bill announced that **Judy Scott Feldman**, head of the National Coalition to Save Our Mall, is launching a competition to come up with a plan to improve the Washington Monument grounds; this will be in cooperation with the National Park Service plan for the National Mall.

Joe Grano announced that the Rhodes Tavern call box project is now officially over and that an exhibit at the Martin Luther King Library will be on display until the end of February.

Treasurer **Hulit Taylor** presented a quick recap of statistics for the past year. The average attendance for AOI events was 90 people. The total membership was 349. The total donation contributions were \$4600. Our investment account increased by \$37K last year. Hulit feels that all measures indicate that we are in a healthy financial position.

Our speaker for today is **John Kelly** of the *Washington Post*. His fascinating column "John Kelly's Washington" is extremely popular and he has become a noted and worthy successor to a series of distinguished media historians chronicling the adventures of Washingtonians, dating back to **John Clagett Proctor**, up to and including most recently **Bob Levey** (November's luncheon speaker).

John mentioned that he has wanted to come to an AOI luncheon for some time, but that he has a time conflict

normally as he hosts a Washington Post web site live on-line on Friday for the Post. John has amassed an amazing compendium of Washingtoniana. He is very familiar with neighborhood Washington and its inhabitants. He presented us with a delightful talk, commenting on how he researches Washington history---heavy reliance on the internet, and Pro Quest in particular. His father grew up on Otis St in DC. His newspaperman's sense of history is much influenced by the unusual, the bazaar, the weird and flakey event. He quoted local stories that interested him (from Post archives), such as a 1953 article of a government worker who was a flagpole sitter and painter, one of two employees assigned to take care of 500 flagpoles in Washington; and the saga of a man named Dyer who was fascinated by digging subterranean tunnels which became exposed when a truck overturned and broke through to them exposing a honeycombed network near DuPont Circle. A 1927 article stated that "Washington centers of crime have been wiped out. Efficient Police Force obliterated the cities underworld." Kelly noted that it has grown back since 1927 and now. He recounted that during his youth the police stressed something called "Human Kindness Day" in parks and public places. This was an unfortunate choice since there was a riot that day. This led to the police saying, "you better get out of here--it's human kindness Day!"

Questions from the audience touched on many amusing topics drawn from local history, including the Alibi Club, the Hopfenmaier rendering plant, the electrical sign by the newspaper office which went haywire when an unassisted triple play (a very rare event) was executed during the 1920 World Series, and many other entertaining bits of newspaper lore. A very strong interaction with the membership was obvious, and people were most anxious to cite experiences and ask questions. John seemed most happy to listen to suggestions for articles and questions to explore, and generously invited email and other communications from our members. He mentioned how a simple article on making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich generated hundreds of emails back to him with suggestions... It was a most enjoyable session.

Respectfully submitted, *Seymour Selig*

AOI Seeks Members and Records of AOI (Colored), Inc....

When former Historical Society Vice-president and Library Director **Gail Redmann McCormick** wrote an abstract of the history of the AOI she mentioned a "parallel African-American Organization – The Oldest Inhabitants, Inc. – [that] was founded in 1912, but is no longer active" which prompted AOI Historian, **Nelson Rimensnyder**, to begin a search for former members of that organization and its records.

Over the course of the past year, Nelson has collected numerous newspaper articles, ephemera and obituaries which reference this organization but he has been unable to find anyone who was personally involved or who might know the whereabouts of their records. Among the

artifacts that Nelson located was a program from a dinner event that lists many of the organization's members and the original letters of incorporation (1916).

In December 2009, AOI President **Bill Brown** and Nelson Rimensnyder approached the District's Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs' Corporations Division to examine and reconcile the records they have on file for various "AOIs." Their research then took them to the D.C. Archives where, with the assistance of archivist **Bill Branch**, they were able to locate the Libres, Folios and File Numbers of not only two filings related to the AOI but the incorporation papers of the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants (Colored), Incorporated. Incorporated January 15, 1916, the AOI (Colored), Incorporated's mission statement was word-for-word that of the AOI, recognizing their membership to be comprised of African-Americans where the AOI, at the time, was comprised of only white males. Records showed that 'our' AOI was first incorporated on June 15, 1903 as the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia and Literary and Historical Society of the United States of America. That title must have been too all encompassing or unwieldy for on October 5, 1903, AOI again incorporated with the much shorter, to-the-point name that we hold today – The Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia. Armed with the information that was located at the Archives, AOI worked with DCRA's **Yusif Gasimov**, Program Specialist and Assistant to the Superintendent of Corporations, to reconcile the conflicting and confusing file numbers that DCRA had on record for all of the AOIs. Today, if you query DCRA's website (<http://mblr.dc.gov/corp/lookup/index.asp>) for "Oldest Inhabitants," you will find that the organizations' correct titles and file numbers are now accessible. In hind sight, this was the easy part...

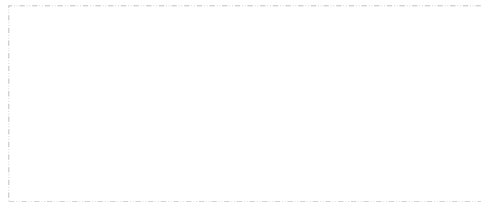
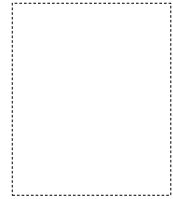
Nelson's research has found that the AOI (Colored), Inc. was active up until the early 1970s; however, he has been unsuccessful in finding people who either were directly involved in the organization or who had relatives active in the organization other than **Alfred Montgomery**, one of our members, who has provided Nelson with some invaluable clues and facts for further research. Research reveals that at times the organization's membership rolls exceeded 400! At one point they held a joint meeting with the AOI of DC in recognition of World War I veterans. Certainly there has to be someone out there who has some knowledge about this very important organization.

Nelson and Bill hope to continue Nelson's research and bring to the attention of other District civic, citizen, church and social organizations their quest for the location and preservation of this organization's records and information about its members.

If you have knowledge about the AOI (Colored), Inc. or know of someone who was a member or participant at one of their functions, please contact either Nelson Rimensnyder or Bill Brown at aoi_of_dc@verizon.net. The information you provide may lead them to locate the records of the organization and save them for posterity.

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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-- Help keep AOI alive and strong: invite friends to join and be sure to renew your membership!
-- Free exhibits, book shop and café at the Historical Society are now open Tues. thru Sun., 10am-5pm! (Kiplinger Library, Tue-Sat) Check HSW's calendar at: www.historydc.org
-- Federation of Citizens' Association's Centennial year. Be sure your community associations are involved. Call 202-797-8467 for more information.



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