



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

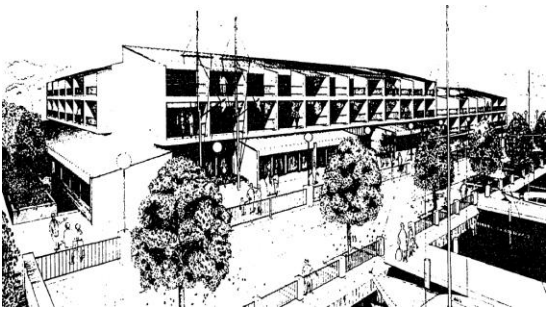
*Welcoming Young & Old Alike to Join in Remembering the Past and Working for an Even Better Future*

*The District's Oldest Civic Organization –  
Founded December 7, 1865*

*Bulletin #115  
March 2014*

## *President's Message...*

End of an Era –



Channel Inn Rendering c. 1971, "Washington Post"

On April 30<sup>th</sup>, the Pier 7 Restaurant will serve its last patron. Owners Manuel and Alma Fernandez will close the doors to both the restaurant and hotel that has been their passion for more than 43 years.

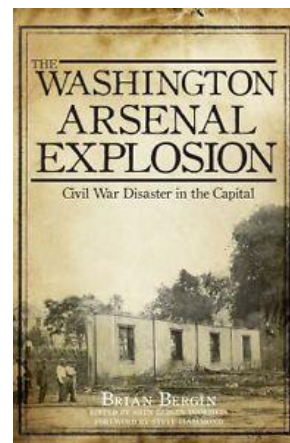
The AOI has held its monthly luncheon meetings at the Pier 7 for more than half that time – enjoying an increase in attendance from about 55 in 1995 to an average of 104 per luncheon in 2013.

AOI member and author John DeFerrari highlighted the Pier 7 in his presentation last month on "Historic Restaurants of Washington, D.C." citing the Fernandez's successful operation of their establishment and Manny's earlier success in operating "The Embers." The dining room and corridors are adorned with Manny's personal collection of historic photographs, nautical artifacts – including a complete ship's steam engine built in Baltimore – and custom chandeliers he designed and had manufactured in Spain.

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## March's Luncheon Event:

**"The Washington Arsenal Explosion"**  
With Erin Bergin Voorheis



*Please join us...*

Friday, **March 21**, at the Channel Inn (free Parking) 650 Water Street, SW. (Maine Avenue via Metro Rail Green to Waterfront Station/SEU or Metro Bus 74 [Circulator Bus discontinued]), Social Time (cash bar) 11:45 a.m., Luncheon served at 12:30 p.m. (**\$25 per person** - please make your check payable to "AOP" and have it completed prior to arrival 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., March 19, 2014.

**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., 3/20, 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/Flounder 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 149<sup>th</sup> Year -- Meeting dates and tentative speakers:

April 18, 2014 – Michael Lisicky, “Woodward & Lothrop: A Story Worthy of the Nation’s Capital”

May 16, 2014 – Location & Topic To Be Announced

June 20, 2014 – Frank Cooling, “The Battle of Ft. Stevens” – Tentative; Location To Be Announced

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.

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

[Draft minutes of our last meeting for approval at the March 21, 2014 luncheon.]

AOI held the first meeting of its 149<sup>th</sup> year at Pier 7 Restaurant on Friday, Feb. 21. More than 100 members and guests were on hand to hear local historian-blogger John DeFerrari speak on “Historic Restaurants of Southwest Washington, D.C.”

The draft minutes of the November 2013 meeting were approved as distributed.

**Membership Report:** The following 8 new members were approved by voice vote: **Vera Abbott** (nominated by Phil Pannell); **Pat Bitondo** (recruited by Hulit and husband Ron... a long-time AOI member ...); **Deborah (Chamberlain) Sherwood** (“A ‘stranger’ at Politics & Prose recruited her...”); **Richard DiBuono** (associate of our late member Joe Grano); **Carol Purdy** (discovered us via our web site); **Rosemary Reed\*** (past guest speaker and frequent guest nominated by Juliette Smith); **Arthur Slater\*** (Phil Pannell); and, **Michael Taimi\*** (nominated by Dorothy Hartland) \*were present at today’s luncheon.

**Treasurer’s Report:** **Hulit Taylor** reported that there were 366 total members in 2013; The AOI membership contributed generously to our three restricted funds – Historical Society of Washington/Kiplinger Library, Phil Ogilvie Award, and Shepherd Statue – and to our Unrestricted Fund; with these funds, we were able to disburse \$7,019 as designated, for which the Board is appreciative of member generosity. Last year the value of our investments increased over 19%; proceeds from the sale of the 1862 Arnold Civil War Map that sold at auction last fall were \$10,790.00; average attendance at our luncheon meetings last year was 104; more than two-thirds of our members have renewed, plus four new members who have joined so far in 2014; and a \$500 grant was given to Military Road School Preservation Trust to sponsor their 150<sup>th</sup> Year Gala celebration. AOI will have a full-page ad in their souvenir booklet.

First Timers, new members and guests were introduced.

AOI member **Thomas Neale** has arranged for a tribute service to Joe Grano on Sun., April 6<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 at the Church of the Annunciation, located at 3810 Massachusetts Avenue (just north of Wisconsin on the left side) near Idaho Avenue. Those wishing to do so will meet for lunch afterwards at the Westchester.

**Historian Nelson Rimensnyder** posed three trivia questions before the speaker began:

- What is the change to the Washington license plate? (Answer: It now reads “District of Columbia” vice “Washington, D.C.”)
- Who are the two D.C. residents portrayed in the large mural in the Martin Luther King Library? (Answer: Marion Barry and Walter Fauntroy)
- What were the three favorite offerings at Rhodes Tavern? (Answer: oysters, porter, and Madeira)

**John DeFerrari** last addressed AOI in April 2012, when he discussed his book, “Lost Washington.” The speaker’s topic Feb. 21 was “Historic Restaurants of Southwest Washington, D.C.” which he said he had chosen from his recently published book, “Historic Restaurants of Washington, D.C.: Capital Eats.” He explained the topic choice as related to the waterfront location of the restaurant and to interests of AOI members. The earliest Washington restaurants were taverns, which moved through progressions to tea houses and on to restaurants. The speaker noted that the oldest D.C. restaurant still operating in its original location is the U.S. Capitol Restaurant, which attracted New York chefs eager to build a reputation with members of Congress. One such restaurateur was George T. Downing, an African-American who saw the opportunity to lobby Congress for civil rights legislation through proximity to the legislators.

In the early days of Washington restaurants during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, oysters were the equivalent of fried chicken today: ubiquitous and cheap. Oyster houses proliferated after John Crisfield built a railroad spur to Tangier Sound on the Chesapeake Bay and shipped oysters in huge quantities to Washington for sale. Harvey’s Restaurant became the most famous of the oyster restaurants at its original location on

Pennsylvania Ave., NW. after 1858, serving an estimated 500 wagons full of steamed oysters per week.

The Washington waterfront at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a dangerous, run-down commercial area fueled by trade in sea food. Principal employers in the area, besides the sea food trade, were the Arsenal on Greenleaf Point and the Naval Gun Factory. At least 50-60 oyster boats tied up regularly along Maine Ave. Oysters were cheap, averaging from 40-65 cents/bushel in that period.

Among the best-known waterfront restaurants were Harrigan's (9<sup>th</sup> and H Sts., SW), opened by an Irishman and purchased later by a Jew so that it became a combination Irish bar and Jewish deli! Hall's (10<sup>th</sup> and Constitution Ave, SW) became known for a large, flord painting of Adam and Eve over the bar. Hall's moved to Buzzard Point in 1964, along with the painting, and closed in 1971.

A major public structure intended to rationalize the chaotic sea food trade on the waterfront was the Municipal Fish Market (1916), a long, brick structure that made it possible to impose health and sanitation regulations on the vendors.

Other waterfront restaurants included Herzog's Seafood Café (1912); Naylor's; Pier 7; Hogates; and the Market Inn, which closed in 2008 and featured an extension of the U.S. Capitol bell system for Member votes. Senator Claude Pepper (D-Fla.) reportedly would instruct the staff to put his meal in the oven while he went to vote before returning to finish his lunch.

In response to questions to his well-received talk, the speaker said that removal of oyster shells was a major problem; Harvey's had a dedicated truck fleet for the purpose. Many shells were used in land fill and for road surfacing. The speaker confirmed that virtually all the waterfront restaurants were racially segregated until legislation and practice changed. However, at least one waterfront restaurant, the Cadillac, served a black clientele.

Following presentation of an AOI certificate to the speaker, the President announced the next luncheon event for Friday, March 21<sup>st</sup>, when Erin Bergin Voorheis will discuss her book based upon her father's research on the Washington Arsenal Explosion, which killed a number of young women at what we now know as Ft. McNair. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,  
John P. Richardson, Secretary

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

We have known that the days were numbered for the Pier 7/Channel Inn since plans were revealed for the redevelopment of the Southwest waterfront several years ago; however, we had hoped that we would have until 2017 or 2018 to have to face the reality that our favorite event venue would eventually face the wrecking ball.

The AOI Board is working diligently to find a new location for our luncheons and New Year's Day reception with convenience, quality, value and parking being our foremost concerns. We are resigned to the fact that it is

highly unlikely that we will ever find a bargain like the one extended to us by the Fernandez's – plated, 3-course luncheon, accommodations and 3-hours of validated parking for what we are currently charged... not to mention the view of the Channel. We hope everyone will be open-minded, flexible and understanding as we work to find a new home for the AOI's successful luncheon meetings. We hope to identify a new location in time for our May luncheon in order that we may continue our programs without interruption.



**The Channel Inn/Pier 7 has been AOI luncheon and event venue on the waterfront for more than 20 years.**

We will all certainly miss Manny and Alma, their courteous wait staff and their hospitality and wish the Fernandezes a relaxed and healthy retirement.

*Bill Brown*

### ***Farewell Joe Grano...***

On January 19<sup>th</sup>, more than 200 friends, admirers and associates gathered at Casa Italiana to bid farewell to AOI member **Joseph Grano** who died in November. Those who may have wished to attend the event but could not, will have another opportunity to pay their respects to Joe on Sunday, April 6 at 12:30 at the Church of Annunciation, 3810 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. Ample parking is available. Friends of Joe are welcome to gather afterward for an informal lunch at the nearby Westchester Dining Room, 4000 Cathedral Avenue, N.W. Reservations for lunch are suggested; call 202-333-1882.

Our web site is <http://www.aoidc.org> or simply "Google" 'Governor Shepherd' and we'll pop-up!

Our e-mail address is: [aoidc@gmail.com](mailto:aoidc@gmail.com)

AOI's newsletters are printed and assembled by the staff of:

**GRC**  
direct

*Address Correction Requested*

The Association of the Oldest Inhabitants  
of the District of Columbia  
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A. L. Wheeler 202-337-0030

Luncheon RSVP Voice-mail: 202-342-1865

View AOP's web site at [www.aidc.org/upcoming-events.html](http://www.aidc.org/upcoming-events.html) and *listen* to Paul Leeper's and Conrad Reid's programs.

The Historical Society of Washington has named John Suau their new Executive Director. See HSW's web site for details: [www.historydc.org](http://www.historydc.org).

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