



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 151st Year!**

**Bulletin #130
March 2016**

President's Message...

Well into her 90s, my mother-in-law Bea Meloon used to recall her and husband George's experiences either renting or sharing quarters with "government girls" during World War II here in the District. During those years, they lived on M. Street just off Scott Circle and later on F Street in Foggy Bottom. Bea would recall the mix of personalities, 'career objectives,' the cramped conditions, the sharing of bathrooms and sleeping in 'shifts.'

One challenge was keeping the tenants they took in: "One was a school teacher from South Dakota and the other was a grandmother and, darned, if they both didn't find husbands and leave, sticking us with the rent!" "Another flew into town determined to conquer Washington. Every payday she'd go and buy a new outfit and had lots of dates... that lasted until her husband arrived and spirited her back home to Texas!"

Those were but a few of Bea's reminiscences from the perspective of a government worker vs. being a 'government girl' and that of being a landlord during those difficult times. American University Professor and AOI member Cindy Gueli, explores the lives of those thousands of women, both young and old(er), who took a huge gamble, left their homes and families and ventured to 'the big city' to not only support their country during a time a need but to seek out a life for themselves in post-depression Washington, D.C. Research for her book included interviews with AOI members Mary Brown (pictured right) and Georgia Herron as well as insights provided by the late Austin Kiplinger and Robert Barbuto.

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March's Luncheon Event:

"The Lipstick Brigade: The Untold True Story of Washington's World War II Government Girls" with Cindy Gueli



Photo by Maurice G. Fitzgerald

(L-R) Cindy Gueli, PhD., Mary Brown & Alberta Gueli

Please join us...

Friday, **March 18**, 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., March 15, 2016.

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., 3/17, 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 (***Panko Crusted Baked Cod with lemon butter 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 151st Year -- Meeting dates and tentative speakers:

April 15, 2016 – Stephen Grant: “Collecting Shakespeare: The Story of Henry & Emily Folge

May 20, 2016 – Robert Patrick, “The Library of Congress’ Veterans’ History Project” (tentative)

June 17, 2016 – Earl P. Williams, Jr., “A Civil Servant Designed Our National Banner: The unsung legacy of Francis Hopkinson

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...

[Draft minutes of our last meeting for approval at the March 18, 2016 luncheon.]

The Association of Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia (AOI) held the first meeting of its 151st year at the Capitol Skyline Hotel at Noon Friday, February 19, 2016 with 63 members and guests attending.

Draft minutes of the November meeting (text in the February 2016 newsletter) were approved as distributed.

Barbara Ioanes moved with **Carl Cole** seconding.

Treasurer's Report: **Maggie Hobbs** presented the February Treasurer's Report in the absence of Treasurer **Hulit Taylor**, convalescing following knee surgery.

RECAP OF 2015

Membership

- We had 357 members last year, in keeping with previous years.

Grants

- The AOI membership contributed generously to our funds for the Historical Society of Washington - Kiplinger Library, the Phil Ogilvie Award and to our Unrestricted Fund.
- From these funds, we disbursed \$2,900.

Investment Account

- With the membership's approval, we withdrew \$150,000 from the Investment Account for the Awards presented at the 150th Gala.

Average Meeting Attendance for 2015

- The average attendance at our luncheon meetings last year was 69.

150TH ANNIVERSARY GALA

- Income from tickets and donations \$9,435.00
- Expenses \$11,308.10
- Cost to AOI (\$1,873.10)

2016 YEAR-TO-DATE

Membership Renewals

- Two-thirds of our members have already renewed

this year, and three new members have joined.

- If you have not yet renewed, we encourage you to do so as soon as possible.

Non-Routine Expenses

- \$650 to the Historical Society of Washington (HSW) for a half-page ad in the Fall 2015 & Spring 2016 issues of *Washington History Magazine*

MEMBERSHIP REPORT: 7 new members were approved: **Mary Alexander** (Shirley Chercasky); **Carolyn Crouch** (Washington Walks tours); **Jessie Dowling** (unknown sponsor); **Mark Ohnmacht** (Martin Murray...and is Director of Woodley/Cleveland Park Village); **Donald Smith** (unknown sponsor); **Hayden Wetzel** (past speaker, researcher and tour guide); and **Linda White** (Delores Foster). **Pat Clark** moved and **Allen Beach** seconded.

SPECIAL BOARD ELECTION: Bill Brown presented the name of **Thomas Neale** to fill the remaining portion of the late Cindy Janke's term on the AOI Board of Directors. Tom Neale, with the Congressional Service, is well known to the AOI membership and is highly qualified. Upon motion made and seconded, Tom Neale was unanimously elected to the AOI Board to fill the remaining portion of Cindy's term. **Carl Cole** moved and **Shirley de la Barre** seconded.

GUESTS: Bill welcomed the following guests at the luncheon: **Charles Szlenker** was Patricia Clark's guest; **Thomas Hickman** and **Carolyn Hickman** were Victor's and Betty's guests; Director Jessica Hodge had several guests: **Richard Jenkins** from Moorland-Spangarn Library at Howard University, last November's speaker **Carole Ottesen**, **Sheila Gregory Thomas** and **Tony Travis**. In addition to our guest speakers today -- **Delores Mounsey** and her sister **Mera Mounsey Archambeau** -- **Mera's husband, Lester**, joined us. Wally Rossmiller had with him **Ruth Cornelson**; Ruth Sando's guest was **Rose Schneider**, Lauren Tawil's guest was Bill's neighbor **Connie Kerwin**; and, **Pastor Edwin Jones** was W. Earl Williams' guest.

PRESIDENT'S ACCOUNCEMENTS:

In addition to formal "thank you's" and acknowledgments, Bill said he had received numerous expressions of appreciation for our six sesquicentennial donations. In fact, while Pat Tyson of the Military Road School Preservation Trust was unable to be with us today, her sister and MRSPT Secretary Theresa Saxton expressed the appreciation of MRSPT for the generous AOI grant.

Juliette Smith also put in a plug for Hexagon, the political satire show, which will be performed in the new auditorium of Wilson High School.

TRIVIA QUESTIONS (Nelson Rimensnyder)

Q: Why did Walt Whitman come to Washington during the Civil War?

A: In order to nurse his brother George, a Union soldier – **Barbara Ioanes** answered correctly

Q: Why did Congress appropriate \$2,000 for the District of Columbia in 1800?

A: In order to provide for sidewalks on PA Avenue – guest **Rose Schneider** had the answer

Q: For which war were the District's two Congressional Medal of Honor winners awarded:

A: The Korean War – guest **Richard Jenkins** knew the answer

Q: What two Federal positions did Frederick Douglas hold?

A: Recorder of Deeds & U.S. Marshal – guest **Charles Szlenker** answered

INTRODUCTION OF THE SPEAKER, DELORES MOUNSEY

To most AOI members, Bill said he need not retell the fascinating story of AOI's quest for the records of the AOI (Colored), Incorporated – aka the Oldest Inhabitants, Inc. – **Dr. James Goode's** serendipitous discovery of William D. Nixon's papers while researching his most recent book -- William Nixon's granddaughters' **Delores Mounsey** and **Mera Mounsey Archambeau** donation of their grandfather's collection of files, clippings, photos and correspondence to Howard University's Mooreland-Spingarn Library. Today, **Jessica Hodge** has arranged for **Delores** and **Mera** to join us today and tell us more about their grandfather's career, position with the Oldest Inhabitants, Inc. and his life of civic activism.

The speaker, assisted by her sister Mera, provided a fascinating account of their grandfather William D. Nixon's life of accomplishment and struggle for African-American rights and dignity, describing him as "a man before his time." A slide show gave additional drama to the talk.

The story of the discovery of the records of AOI (Colored) began with a telephone call several years ago from James Goode, who was engaged in research for his recently published Capital Houses and was considering including a house on University Terrace, NW, designed by William Nixon. When Goode visited, Nixon's granddaughter Delores mentioned the existence of her grandfather's records of the

Oldest Inhabitants, Inc. which Goode recognized immediately for their significance, since AOI's Nelson Rimensnyder had been seeking information on the organization without much success. The current AOI and Ms. Mounsey were quickly introduced, assisted by *Post* columnist John Kelly, and the substantial archive has now been donated to the Moorland-Spingarn research collection at Howard University.

Delores described the many talents of her grandfather, who was an art teacher at Dunbar High School in D.C. for 43 years, during which Dunbar was known as the incubator for many of the city's most talented black youths. William Nixon was an artist, a self-taught architect, a writer, a furniture maker, and a designer of plaques and certificates. Side by side with his professional productivity was a passion for justice and a non-stop campaign to demand fairness and justice for blacks – often insisting on even-handed application of existing laws and regulations, e.g., highlighting unequal salary schedules for blacks and whites in the D.C. Fire and Police Departments. Among his campaigns was a black Cherry Blossom princess, gaining access for black soldiers to the D.C. Armory, calling out Senator Theodore Bilbo, the notorious racist Mississippi Senator, and demanding justice for the predominantly black residents of Southwest Washington displaced by the massive urban renewal in the 1950's. After Nixon's death in 1962, both the Washington Post and Evening Star wrote glowing obituaries of this remarkable man.

Following the talk, a library staff member from Howard University, Richard Jenkins, spoke about the Moorland-Spingarn collection and highlighted some of its other collections of papers, including Paul Robeson, Dr. Charles Drew, and some of the Frederick Douglass archive.

NEXT MEETING: Bill announced that the next AOI luncheon meeting will be held Friday, March 18, at the Capitol view featuring "The Lipstick Brigade" member **Cindy Gueli's** book on the women's workforce during WWII.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

John P. Richardson, Secretary

President's Message (Cont'd.)

These young women, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, were considered white-collar "Rosie the Riveters" filling the ranks of stenographers, typists, accountants, code-breakers, analysts and intelligence officers. Following the conclusion of the war many returned to their homes and their families but large numbers remained in the area to begin families of their own.

Bill Brown

Address Correction Requested

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of the District of Columbia
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District of Columbia 20007-2010

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Past President:

A. L. Wheeler 202-337-0030

Luncheon RSVP Voice-mail: 202-342-1865

On Saturday, March 12, the **Heurich House Museum** will be offering free self-guided tours as part of *Smithsonian* magazine's Museum Day Live! which provides an opportunity for the public, especially women and girls, to enjoy and share in our nation's dynamic heritage and cultural life. The museum will feature correspondence among the women of the Heurich family, many of which have never been on public display. The house will be open from 11:30 am to 3:30 pm. Allow 30-45 minutes to visit the museum. No reservations or tickets are required!

Directors:

Carl Cole 202-889-8813
Damon Cordon 301-215-7022
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.