



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 – Our 149th Year!***

Bulletin #117

May 2014

President's Message...

Having missed the sesquicentennial... we may not have to wait for the bicentennial...

One of Past-President Harold Gray's unfulfilled dreams was to commemorate the District's lesser-known Civil War Forts, particularly those in his home neighborhood of the Palisades but, also, to serve as a model for other communities. Harold's dream was but one of several plans going back to 1919 if not earlier. In 1926 when the National Capital Parks and Planning Commission was established, one of its goals was to explore creating the Fort Drive... a 39-mile long parkway that would connect the District's circle forts from the Potomac Palisades to Fort Foote. The initiative lost steam following WWII but was still being considered as late as 1964 when, alas, a news article lamented that "perhaps the Fort Drive was no longer needed because... city roads ran past most of the forts." Today there are only vestiges of the Fort Drive... picture Dalecarlia Parkway, portions of Western Avenue, Military Road and Missouri Avenue as existing roads that run past a number of Civil War forts.



Over the years numerous groups, including the AOI of DC, met, wrote letters and tried to convince the Park Service, the (now) NCPC and others to take the deteriorating conditions of all the forts seriously...

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May's Luncheon Event:

"The Battle of Ft. Stevens: 150 Years Later"

With Benjamin Franklin Cooling, III



Please join us...

Friday, **May 16**, 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.

(\$30 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., May 13, 2014 – EARLIER RSVP TIME!!

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., 5/15, 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 (***Sun Dried Tomato Pesto Crusted Flounder, 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.

>>> NOTE NEW LOCATION<<<

Future Meetings...



The AOI's 149th Year -- Meeting dates and tentative speakers:

- June 20, 2014 – Michael Canning: “Hollywood on the Potomac”
- Sept. 19, 2014 – Patricia Daly-Lipe: “William A. Hemmick: From Patriot Priest (WWI) to the Vatican”
- Oct. 17, 2014 – Garrett Peck, “The Washington Brewery at the Navy Yard”
- Nov. 21, 2014 – Annual Elections and topic 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.

If You Were Not At Our Last Meeting...

[Draft minutes of our last meeting for approval at the May 16, 2014 luncheon.]

AOI held the third meeting of its 149th year in a brand-new location: the Capitol Skyline Hotel in a redeveloped neighborhood close to Nationals stadium and the Anacostia River waterfront. By finding a new meeting venue, the organization made a swift recovery after being handed our walking papers by Pier 7 on the day of the March luncheon. By all accounts, the Morris Lapidus-designed hotel, renovated in 2009, was a hit with the 132 members and guests who convened to hear Michael Lisicky, a Baltimore Symphony oboist by trade, discuss his new book, “Woodward & Lothrop: A Story Worthy of the Nation’s Capital.”

The draft minutes of the March 2014 meeting were approved as distributed.

Membership Report: We now have 313 members, 12 of whom are new. The following six membership applicants were approved by voice vote and welcomed into the organization:

Mary Ernstthal, Penelope Hansen, Lizzy O’Hara, George Pazianos, Donald Rothacker, and Kathleen McAuliff

Treasurer’s Report:

Non-Routine Expense since March Luncheon

- \$200 for Gratuities -- \$50 each to the four Pier 7 waiters who served us over the years.
- Investment Account: The Board approved investing the proceeds from the Arnold Map in a mutual fund.
- Today’s luncheon attendance is a record-breaker and a far cry from the first attendance record in October 1999, with 53 on hand.

Brief Announcements:

-The National Park Service has placed new interpretive signage at the DC War Memorial, a request that

AOI has made repeatedly since renovation of the memorial several years ago.

-AOI has put in a bid to have the Marine Band hold summer concerts at the War Memorial sometime during the centennial years of the First World War (1914-1918).

-Member **Thomas Neale** arranged a memorial mass for **Joe Grano** April 6 at the Church of the Annunciation in Washington.

Historian Nelson Rimensnyder posed several trivia questions to an enthusiastic audience:

Why did the son of a Woodward & Lothrop founder take a two-year leave of absence? (World War I service)

Where did Woodward & Lothrop establish its first foreign office? (Paris)

What Member of Congress introduced a resolution in 1849 calling for abolition of slavery? (Abraham Lincoln)

What sum of money did Congress approve for compensation to owners for the 1862 emancipation of slaves in D.C., and how many were freed? (\$1 million; 3,000)

Today’s speaker, **Michael Lisicky**, gave a highly energetic talk about America’s great department stores, with special focus on Woodward & Lothrop, the subject of his new book, copies of which were on hand for purchase and autographs. Michael cited his life-long interest in department stores and fielded names of cities from the audience, rattling off names of their department stores and current status, if any. Samuel W. Woodward and Alvin M. Lothrop were Bostonians whose first store was in Chelsea, Mass., after which they embarked on a new store in Washington in 1880 named, appropriately enough, Boston Dry Goods; the eventual store name was added in 1887. Michael recounted the partners’ steady expansion in downtown Washington, culminating in a formal opening of their flagship store at 11th and G St., NW in 1925, adding what became known as the North Building (formerly Palais Royal) in 1946. From the start the store created a niche above typical department stores without putting on airs as a high-end operation. The talk was buttressed with photographs of the well-remembered, elegant

first floor (“The Silver Room”) that was part of a full half of display space devoted to home furnishings.

After World War II competition set in as the suburbs expanded and out-of-town department stores like Hecht’s, Kann’s, and Lansburgh’s fought for the middle-class market. Woodie’s rose to the challenge by opening a number of suburban stores in the Washington area, including the Pentagon, Chevy Chase, Silver Spring, Wheaton, Prince George’s Plaza, and Tysons Corner. Woodie’s changed its policy of segregated facilities after the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King. Opening of the Metro system in 1976 brought customers back downtown, but it was too late.. The corporation was sold to a Detroit financier in 1984, even though it continued to operate as Woodward & Lothrop before closing for good in 1995. In keeping with the evocation of Woodie’s as a family experience, a number of luncheon guests reminisced with personal anecdotes about visiting Woodie’s in years past. Here is Woodie’s last ad:

When you remember Christmas in Washington,
Or think of your **first** day at school.
When you smell your **mother’s** perfume
Or **think** of Saturdays in the Tea Room with
Grandma or plunk down in your
very favorite chair. When you wear
your **well-worn** favorite shirt or
think about your **first** “interview” suit or
remember seeing **yourself** in those huge
mirrors in your perfect wedding gown,
Woodie’s will **always** be here.
It’s been nice **knowing** you
And **thank you**.
Woodward & Lothrop

Our next meeting is Friday, May 16, when Dr. Frank Cooling will speak on the Civil War battle of Ft. Stevens.

Respectfully submitted,
John P. Richardson, Secretary

President’s Message Continued...

...and establish an authority that would cut across NPS jurisdictions (Rock Creek, National Capital Parks East, G.W. Memorial Parkway, etc.) and coordinate the preservation, stabilization and promotion of our Circle Fort Parks. Progress was made in 2010 when the National Capital Region of the NPS assigned a Supervisory Park Ranger, Alexa Viets, to coordinate such an effort. Since that time some progress has been made to create the Civil War Defenses of Washington (a ‘virtual’ park), place up-dated markers and waysides, establish volunteer groups, creatively connect the Circle Forts with driving, walking and biking routes, promote all of this in new brochures and create a website (nps.gov/cwdw). While praiseworthy, these efforts have been insufficient to maintain, connect and promote our circle of Civil War forts that defended the Nation’s Capital.

Now, H.R. 4003 “The Civil War Defenses of Washington National Historical Park Act” has been introduced by Congresswoman Norton at the urging of the Alliance to Preserve the Civil War Forts of Washington

(www.dccivilwarforts.org) – led by Susan Claffey, Loretta Neumann, Tersh Boasberg, Frank Cooling and others – to establish, once and for all, a true, new national park that cuts across all affected jurisdictions.

While the outcome of H.R. 4003 is uncertain and, obviously, the legislation and its results, even if enacted, will not be realized in time for this sesquicentennial celebration of the Civil War, we certainly hope that it proceeds swiftly and that our ‘heirs’ are not still having to pursue this important issue when the bicentennial of the Civil War commences in 2061!

Bill Brown

Arsenal Explosion Up-date... Erin Bergin Voorheis has sent word that the 150th Anniversary of the Arsenal Explosion will be commemorated at 11am on Tuesday, June 17th at Ft. McNair. While the event hasn’t been posted yet, you might check www.army.mil/article/124261/ to see if information is posted there. Then on Saturday, June 21st at 1pm, Congressional Cemetery will have an Arsenal Explosion ceremony followed by a walking tour www.congressionalcemetery.org. Erin’s book and presentation generated great interest among our membership. Also, monitor the above [army.mil](http://www.army.mil) site as open houses are also scheduled for Aug 2nd and Nov 1st for the Lincoln Conspirators’ Court Room tour.

After Action Report... The reviews are in and our new luncheon venue at the Capitol Skyline Hotel was a great success. I take responsibility for the entrées being a little late (miscommunication on my part) but those present will have to admit the additional social time between the meeting and eating was probably well spent and no one needed to be concerned about their 3-hour parking ‘expiring’ (since there is no limit now) so the program could run over time. We will endeavor to spread the tables out a little more to provide more space for both us and the servers. Most everyone was ‘good’ about observing our new **72 hours** in advance RSVP rule (e.g., noon on the **Tuesday** prior to Friday’s luncheon). If you do not RSVP by the deadline, your food choice may not be available and it makes planning for both us and the hotel very difficult, so please... RSVP by the deadline. And, failure to cancel at least 24-hours in advance will result in you being charged for your meal... when we place our order on Tuesday, AOP’s credit card is billed; so, we’ve already paid for your meal. And, please recall that the actual luncheon cost is \$34, inclusive, but the Board has elected to ease the transition by underwriting \$4 per person for the remainder of this year.

The AOI Board appreciates your patience and understanding as we embark on this new luncheon meeting ‘adventure.’ We are pleased that everyone was so enthusiastic with our new hosts and locale.

Bill Brown

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

Address Correction Requested

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Luncheon RSVP Voice-mail: 202-342-1865

View AOP's web site at www.aoidc.org/upcoming-events.html and *listen* to Paul Leeper's and Conrad Reid's programs which we have recorded.

**Note Change of Location for our Luncheons!!!
With an EARLIER RSVP DATE!**

Now at: Capitol Skyline Hotel, 10 I ('Eye') St., SW

Directors:

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