

Summer 2019

Lee-Fendall House

MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

The Promise of Freedom and the Price of Failure: Revisiting Reconstruction in Alexandria

Reconstruction was one of the most complicated periods in American history. It was an era of achievement and suppression, hope and violence, promise and failure. As we seek to understand America's continued struggle to live up to its ideals of freedom and equality, we must come to terms with what happened in the Civil War's aftermath. The Lee-Fendall House played a role in these events and is committed to educating today's students and visitors about Reconstruction's impact on Alexandria and the nation.

Alexandria played a pivotal role during Reconstruction in Virginia. As one of the first southern cities to fall under U.S. military control during the Civil War, many enslaved African Americans escaped to Alexandria, seeking freedom and opportunity behind Union lines. At the same time, many of the city's pro-Confederate families fled. By the war's end, half of Alexandria's population were African American. These individuals sought to direct their own lives through employment, property ownership, education, and political participation. Helping former slaves make this transition to freedom was a diverse group of pro-Union Southerners, Northerners, and African Americans known as "Radical Republicans." Together they worked to bring a new, more equitable system of government to Virginia.



A woman standing outside the former Price, Birch & Co. slave pen in Alexandria, Virginia, c. 1865.

Two men, Charles Whittlesey and Edward White, lived in the Lee-Fendall House after the war and were involved in the creation of the local Reconstruction government. In 1868, Edward White pushed for the election of African American men to public office citing the "Reconstruction laws, which granted political equality to all men." White chastised the City Council, claiming that for them to deny this right would indicate they "lacked those qualifications necessary to enable them to keep pace with the progress on the spirit of the age."

Under Reconstruction, many African Americans held political office and established thriving businesses and schools. But their successes often led to violence. Threats, intimidation, and lynchings were tools used by conservative white southerners to undermine progress. Even before Reconstruction formally ended in 1877, conservatives had pushed

to take back political power. Subsequent elections saw the restoration of many of them to government leadership. In 1902, they passed a new Virginia Constitution which effectively ushered in the era of segregation and Jim Crow. Another major attempt to achieve full civil rights for African Americans would not come for another 100 years.

(article continued on page 2)

Lee-Fendall House Museum & Garden

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Follow us on:

 Lee-Fendall House
Museum & Garden

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Museum Hours:

Wed-Sat: 10am - 4pm
Sun: 1 - 4pm

Guided tours offered
on the hour.

Self-guided tours
also available.

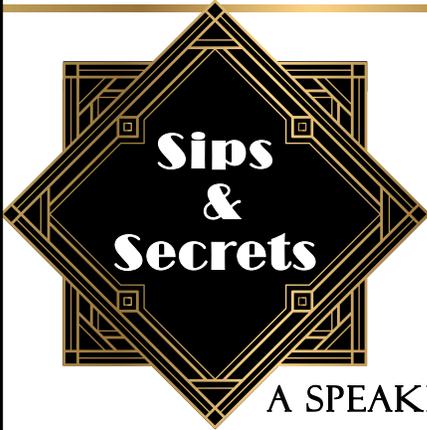
Rentals:

Host your special
events, parties, and
meetings at the
Lee-Fendall House!

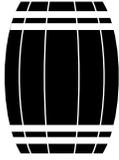
Check out rental details at
www.leefendallhouse.org

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Last year, the museum created a field trip program for 4th-6th graders that uses primary documents and on-site tours to help students understand the experiences and decisions people faced during Reconstruction. For more information about this program, please contact our Manager of Education, Amanda Roper, at amanda.roper@leefendallhouse.org.



A SPEAKEASY NIGHT



Lee-Fendall House Museum
ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2019
7:00 - 10:00 PM
VIP RECEPTION AT 6:30 PM

Enjoy drinks, jazz, and flapper-style fun!

For tickets and event information visit:
www.leefendallhouse.org



Tickets now available!

Sponsorship opportunities for Sips & Secrets are available for companies, organizations, or individuals interested in supporting Lee-Fendall House's mission.

To discuss sponsorship opportunities, please contact Megan Ritter, event chair, at megan.ritter@leefendallhouse.org.

the Real Volunteers

OF LEE-FENDALL HOUSE



Ed Horn (pictured right) working on a project in the house's garden.

A Mr. Fix-It for This Old House

This summer we are excited to feature one of our most dedicated volunteers, Ed Horn. Many years ago, Ed was working on a construction project in a home on Oronoco Street, just a few houses down from the Lee-Fendall House. The homeowners, who at the time were affiliated with Lee-Fendall's leadership, persuaded Ed to get involved with the museum and join its Board of Directors. A contractor by day, Ed brought much-needed building and maintenance experience to the table. For nearly 25 years, he has served on the Board, providing valuable facilities expertise and guidance on the structural upkeep of the house.

Looking after a building as old as the Lee-Fendall House is no easy task. Maintaining an older wood and plaster house, particularly one that operates as a museum is difficult. Exposure to daily visitors puts continual wear and tear on its structure. The challenge is compounded by the need to preserve its historical integrity as repairs are made. Ed works closely with the museum's staff to tackle issues as they arise and also to identify future long-term and short-term projects the house will need. Ed helps decide which projects to prioritize and works with the staff to coordinate their execution, all while operating within the museum's limited budget.

Over the years, Ed has spearheaded numerous projects that ensure the museum's long-term survival and its status as an Alexandria showplace. His most memorable

project to date is the replacement of the summer beam that runs under the house's central hallway. This labor intensive repair required extensive deconstruction of the hallway, but was essential for preserving the stability of the house. While that was certainly one of the larger projects, Ed also helps with many smaller, everyday repairs. Just a few months ago, Ed revamped the museum's conference room, adding crown molding and a fresh coat of paint. He also recently repainted and added lighting to the seasonal exhibit room.

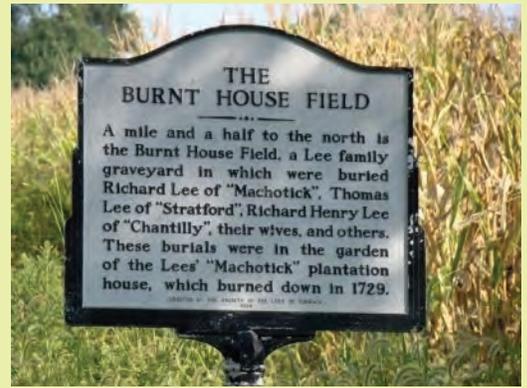
Ed's continued service has been invaluable to the success of the Lee-Fendall House. And you may think that after 25 years, he might consider slowing down, but not Ed! He has a number of projects in the pipeline for the museum, ranging from painting the house's exterior to replacing its roof to repairing the outdoor privy building. For right now though, Ed's working on installing new custom replicate shutters to replace some that have grown weather-beaten. Drop by the museum to see his latest projects in progress!



OBJECT SPOTLIGHT

A Cast Iron Pot & A Colonial Nightmare

In 1729, a massive fire brought tragedy upon early political leader Thomas Lee and his family. Creeping through the thick tobacco fields under the veil of night, a group of thieves ambushed Lee's home at Machodoc Plantation, setting the entire estate ablaze. The flames engulfed the mansion home and its surrounding outbuildings, leaving the family and their workers frantic to escape. In the end, an indentured servant girl was killed and many others were injured. The property was destroyed and the family was left with little more than the shirts on their backs. The site of this home, now found in Hague, Virginia, and known as "Burnt House Field," leaves little trace of the once sprawling Machodoc Plantation. In 1950, however, a surprising relic emerged from this sleepy field – a cooking pot.



(Left) The cast iron cooking pot originally from Machodoc Plantation now sitting on the kitchen hearth at Lee-Fendall House; (Above) The historical marker for "Burnt House Field" – the former site of Machodoc Plantation.

This surviving item, a cast iron cooking pot, was salvaged from the grounds, though its bottom had long rusted out from exposure to the elements. Years after its discovery, the cooking pot made its way to its next Lee family home – the Lee-Fendall House.

Looking at the heavy, iron cooking pot draws your thoughts to the lives of the people who used it nearly 300 years ago. Enslaved people of African descent likely used this pot to prepare food for the large number of enslaved and indentured workers, as well as for members of the Lee family, residing on the plantation. Everyday objects like this cooking pot link us to the past in a very fundamental way. We all understand the need to eat and the value an item, such as a cooking pot, has in our daily life. This simple pot provides a tangible connection to the past and to the people and buildings that are now long gone – helping us preserve their stories for generations to come.

As for Thomas Lee's story, he and his family eventually overcame their losses from that night. Thomas became a prominent colonial political figure and would later move to Stratford, Virginia, where he would go on to construct the well-known Lee family home, Stratford Hall, along the Potomac River.

Today, the cooking pot sits on the hearth of the Lee-Fendall House kitchen where it can be viewed by visitors during tours. Make sure to check it out during your next visit!

Enjoy Family Fun at Lee-Fendall House!

Planning out your family's summer schedule? Make room for the Lee-Fendall House! Our museum is a go-to destination for history lovers of all ages. Spice up your weekends this summer with our popular specialty house tours or walking tours. We've also added weekly *Stories from the Past*, a fun and interactive program introducing young children to history that's fun for the whole family.

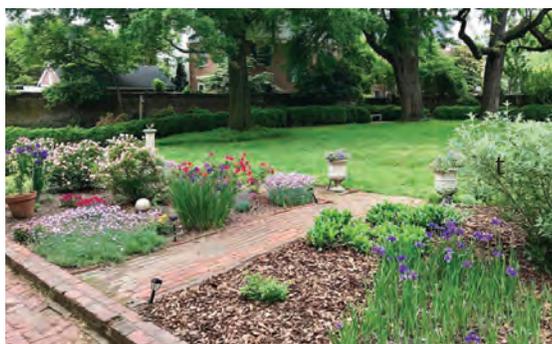
Entertaining guests? Beat the heat and treat your guests to our one-of-a-kind house tour and bring the kids along too! We've designed a space where kids can play with classic toys much like the ones seen in the house. Looking for some outdoor space to picnic or play? Our garden is a great place to relax this summer and is open free to the public during the museum's regular business hours.

We look forward to seeing you this summer and hope you enjoy our great programs!



(Above) The museum's play area where kids can come and play with toys like those found in the house.

(Right) The museum's garden is free and open to the public. Entrance is through the gate on N. Washington Street.



Mark Your Calendars!

★ = free event for Friends of Lee-Fendall House!
Learn more about membership at www.leefendallhouse.org.

Thursdays, 11:00 AM
June 6, 13, 20, & 27 | July 11, 18, & 25 | August 1 & 8

Stories from the Past

Bring your kids to the museum this summer! This fun, educational program introduces historical and cultural concepts to young learners through stories, crafts, experiential play, and special tours of the museum designed to engage young audiences. Each week features a different book and theme.



Saturdays, June 8 & July 27, 10:00 AM
The General's Tour - Robert E. Lee in Alexandria ★

This guided walking tour of Robert E. Lee sites in Alexandria's Historic Old Town will address the complicated legacy of the Confederate general's life in Alexandria, his hometown from the age of five.

Saturday, June 8, 2:00 PM
The Women of Lee-Fendall House ★
A tour tracing the experiences of the women who have lived in and shaped the Lee-Fendall House over the centuries. Beginning in 1791 with Mary Lee Fendall, the tour will culminate in the story of the women who fought to save the house from development in the 1970s.

Fridays, 7:00 PM
June 14 & 28 | July 12 & 26 | August 9 & 23

Trivia Nights at Historic Sites

Staff members at Lee-Fendall House and Carlyle House Historic Park have combined their random nerd knowledge to create bi-weekly trivia nights in our beautiful garden. Test your knowledge on all things from pop culture to history!



Saturdays, June 22 & August 10, 10:00 AM
The War of 1812 in Alexandria - A Walking Tour ★

A guided walking tour of people and places in Old Town associated with the War of 1812.

Saturday, June 29, 2:00 PM
Under the Same Roof: Enslaved and Free Servants at the Lee-Fendall House ★

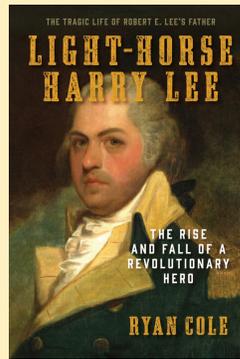
Explore the Lee-Fendall House from the perspectives of the enslaved and free African Americans who lived and worked in the home as domestic servants, both before and after the Civil War. Hear the stories of the many people who shaped the house over its long history.

Saturdays, July 13 & August 24, 10:00 AM
Beyond the Battlefield - A Civil War Walking Tour ★

A guided walking tour of Civil War sites in Historic Old Town focusing on locations and stories associated with soldiers, citizens, and the enslaved, including the occupation of Alexandria and emancipation.

Special Lecture!

Saturday, August 10, 7:00 PM
Light-Horse Harry Lee: The Rise and Fall of a Revolutionary Hero Lecture ★



Come hear author Ryan Cole discuss the tragic life of Light-Horse Harry Lee as recounted in his new book, *Light-Horse Harry Lee: The Rise and Fall of a Revolutionary Hero*. Copies of the book will be available for purchase through the museum's gift shop. A wine and cheese reception will follow.

SAVE THE DATE!

Saturday, September 14, 7:00 - 10:00 PM
Sips & Secrets: A Speakeasy Night
Join us at our annual fundraiser this September! This event celebrates the house's Prohibition-era history with a night full of speakeasy fun. Enjoy drinks, jazz, dancing, and more! All proceeds support the museum's mission to explore our shared history and its relevance to today.

Visit www.leefendallhouse.org:

- View the most up-to-date list of upcoming programs
- Get full event details and ticket information
- Purchase tickets for your favorite events

Ongoing Exhibits:

The New Woman: Life in Progressive Era Alexandria, 1890-1920

Check out this exhibit exploring the lives of three Alexandria women connected to Lee-Fendall House from 1890-1920. Learn about their experiences during this time of immense social and political change.

John L. Lewis: Public Figure, Private Man

Examine the life and legacy of John L. Lewis, one of America's most powerful, innovative, and controversial labor leaders and long-serving president of the United Mine Workers of America. Lewis lived at Lee-Fendall House during the height of his career from 1937-1969.

Entrance to exhibits is free with museum admission.