



Huntley Headlines

Friends of Historic Huntley

Spring 2018

Discovery Day at Historic Huntley!

Saturday, April 14, 1–4 p.m.

6918 Harrison Lane, Alexandria

Sponsored by FOHH

Suggested donation, \$5

Come to Historic Huntley and discover this beautiful 19th-century villa and how it has changed over the 193 years of its history.

Learn about its federal-period architecture and service as a country retreat for the wealthy Alexandria mayor who built it; the transformation and long-time utilization as a year-round, dairy farming residence for the Harrison family; and the post-WWII commuter home it became for Colonel Ransom G. Amlong, his wife, and their six children.

Look out for **Jon Vrana**, historical reenactor, and representatives from **George Mason's Gunston Hall, the Fairfax County Historic Courthouse, and Friends of Fairfax Archaeology.**

For this family-oriented event, come prepared to sleuth through Huntley photos, maps, and artifacts; tour the house; participate in old-time activities such as ice cream- and butter-making; and snap a selfie or Facebook pic with **Huntley the Cow**. Don't miss this opportunity to celebrate spring in historic style!

For more information, call 703.768.2525. ❖

“Sold to the Lady Bidder!”

FOHH Acquires Betsey Mason Letter
by Carolyn Gamble

Within 24 hours of FOHH's learning that a letter written by Betsey C. Mason was to be auctioned off, I found myself at The Potomack Company auction house in Alexandria assessing the letter. I discovered it to be in perfect condition, complete with remnants of sealing wax.

The letter is addressed to magistrate John A. Washington III of Mt. Vernon. Although the letter is undated, we know that Washington became a Fairfax County magistrate in 1844. Through the letter, Betsey appears to be appealing to Washington's leniency when he presides over an upcoming trial of some of her slaves. Here is how the letter begins:

My dear Sir,

I am just informed that my negroes are to be tried before you for certain offences, which they are supposed to have committed against the law during the recent Christmas hollidays.

I am glad at least that they will receive their trial before a man of honor & sensibility to the rights of & feelings of the slave as well as the slaveholder & feeling that confidence in you, yield to this painful necessity, urged upon me however at a time by those who might under the circumstances of my family, have had a gentler feeling for me.

The FOHH Board was excited at the possibility of acquiring this letter. First, it is written by Betsey herself, and second, its subject is slavery. FOHH
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Carolyn Gamble and Patty Young, holding the winning paddle number.

Tea at Historic Huntley Monday, May 14, 1:30–3 p.m.

6918 Harrison Lane, Alexandria

Registration fee, \$15

Tea

*Warms you when you're cold,
Cools you when you're hot,
Cheers you up when you're depressed,
and calms you when you can't sleep.
What would the world do without tea?
I am glad I was not born before tea.*

—William Gladstone, British Prime Minister

How about a day-after-Mother's Day celebration?! A cream tea at Huntley is the perfect gift for mom. Here's an opportunity to treat her to a relaxing pot (or two) of freshly brewed tea. Indulge her with scones slathered in clotted cream and jam, and a plate heaped with tea bread and short bread, following in the tradition of an English tearoom—just how Betsey Mason would have entertained at Huntley. We have no doubt Mrs. Mason would approve. Register at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes). For more information, call 703.768.2525. ❖

President's Column

by Todi Carnes

It was certainly a thrill this January to have Betsey C. Mason virtually reach out from some 150 years ago and speak to us through strong, clear words written in her own hand. It was equally exciting to purchase Betsey's letter, as described by Carolyn Gamble in this newsletter. Our goal was to ensure that the letter did not end up in the hands of a private collector, but that it would be publicly accessible for review and research by Huntley fans, scholars, and other members of the public.

To that end, our work in connection with the letter's acquisition is just beginning. I'll soon be appointing a committee to locate a final repository for the letter—one that can properly preserve and store it, while also maintaining public access to it. Organizations under consideration include Fairfax County Park Authority Collections, Gunston Hall, Mount Vernon's Library for the Study of George Washington, Alexandria's Queen Street Library, and George Mason University's Library. These organizations all have some manner



Greg Wilson, guest speaker at FOHH's fall 2017 annual meeting. His book, *The Adventures of Jonathan Roberts: The Union's Quaker Scout in Northern Virginia, 1861-1865*, is available through Amazon.

of connection to T.F. and/or Betsey Mason. If you know of another such organization that might make a good home for Betsey's letter, please let me know (todocarnes@verizon.net).

Finally, I extend a special thanks to FOHH Board members and supporters for their expeditious and enthusiastic support of the letter's acquisition. To join them in seeding FOHH's new Acquisitions Fund, contributions may be sent to "Friends of Historic Huntley" with a note in the memo line "for Acquisitions" and mailed to FOHH, P.O. Box 7241, Alexandria, VA 22307-0241. ❖

Highest Bidder

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strongly supports researching and interpreting the lives of the enslaved people owned by the T.F. Mason family.

So on Saturday, January 27, some 24 hours after having examined the letter, I found myself at the auction house wielding paddle #742 on FOHH's behalf. Huntley fans Kathi McNeil and Patty Young joined me in the fun. None of us had ever been to an auction before. A Nakashima table went for \$40,000! After three hours, the sale of documents began.

Hearts pounding, we grew excited as items were sold for prices much lower than initial estimates. The auction house's valuation of Betsey's letter was \$600-\$900. "Oh boy," we thought, "we might acquire the letter for less than \$600!" Finally, the letter came up, and the auctioneer reported that off-site bidding for the document was up to \$1,200. Did he hear \$1,300 from the floor? I was so shocked at the price that I failed to put up the paddle! Kathi had to nudge me into action. I put up the paddle. The auctioneer pointed my way and said, "Sold to the lady bidder!"

And that is how, less than 50 hours after having been first notified of its existence, FOHH came to be the proud owner of this significant and coveted letter, an important piece of the Historic Huntley story. (See the letter in its entirety at www.historichuntley.org.) ❖

Karla Jamir

The purchase of the Betsey C. Mason letter was funded by donations from FOHH members and supporters, plus a generous contribution from Karla Jamir. Karla is an FOHH lifetime member, Friends of Huntley Meadows Park Board member, and a long-time volunteer at the park.



Karla's particular interest in Betsey has been fueled by her own research. She has scanned and read the majority of the Thomson Francis Mason letters and papers that are archived at Duke University. Many of the letters in this collection are written by Betsey to her children after the death of T.F. in 1838.

Karla's volunteer work also includes managing the park's herbarium and taking a leadership role in resource management activities such as invasive plant pulls. She was recently recognized with the Daily Points of Light Award, a national honor. ❖

Stories from the Used Book Sale

by Stephen F. Kimbel

More than just the stories contained within their pages, books at Historic Huntley's used book sale have other stories to tell, too—stories about their prior owners. Over the past year, **Lara White** has made many donations to the FOHH used book sale in memory of her late parents, **Carolyn and Roy McDonald**.

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Book Sale Stories

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Carolyn and Roy met in the District of Columbia in 1940. Carolyn was a student at the Corcoran Art School and Roy worked with the FBI. Following their WWII service—Carolyn in the Office of War Information, Roy in the Army Air Corps, they married in 1946. They enjoyed traveling and entertaining family and friends, and shared a love of local history.

In the 1970's, Lara and her mother liked to go exploring on their way home from the shops or after school. They discovered Huntley during one of these adventures. Colonel Ransom G. and Marguerite Amlong had purchased Huntley in 1949. Lara attended a party at the house when it was still owned by the Amlong family. After Fairfax County acquired the property from the Amlong estate in 1989, Carolyn kept pace with restoration efforts through the FOHH newsletter. Lara took note of the happiness these updates on Huntley brought to her mother.

When Huntley opened to public in spring 2012, mother and daughter came to see the house in its restored Mason-era glory. Carolyn, nearing 90 but determined to climb the steep walkway, was delighted by a ride up to the house in the electric-powered golf cart. Marveling at the restoration, they found the ornately carved fireplace mantel in the living room particularly memorable, as well as the incomparable view of Hybla Valley.

Roy passed away in 2007 and Carolyn in 2015. Through Lara's donations from the McDonalds' library to the FOHH used book sale, their memories live on in the Huntley programs and activities those sales support. ❖

FCPA Programs at Historic Huntley

For more information and to register: call Huntley Meadows Park, 703.768.2525, or go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes and search for "Historic Huntley."

History for Homeschoolers

Trips and Studies from April 4, 5 classes, 1-3 p.m., ages 8-12, \$105. Learn about American history by exploring Fairfax and Alexandria history. Must have basic reading and writing skills and be comfortable working in a group. Includes field trips to historic sites of local and national interest; additional fees for entry and tours.

Huntley in the 20th Century

April 12 or May 24, 1-2:30 p.m., adults, \$7. Meet at Historic Huntley and car pool to the other side of Huntley Meadows Park to see traces of the park's 20th-century history. Discover the role Huntley played in the nation's defense. Learn about the schemer who accidentally made the park possible and the dreamer who defended it. Tour includes a mile stroll on easy ground.

The Women of Historic Huntley

April 26 or June 7, 1-2 p.m., adults, \$5. A society matron, an enslaved wife and mother, a farmer's daughter, a military wife; Huntley has been home to interesting women and seen the lives of women change over time.

Twilight Hilltop Tour

April 27 or May 11, 7:30-8:30 p.m., June 8, 8-9 p.m., adults, \$5.

Historic Discussions at Huntley

May 5, 3-4 p.m., adults, \$5. Call 703.768.2525 for this quarter's topic.

Book and CD Sales

FOHH's ongoing sales of used books and CDs at the Huntley Meadows Park Visitor Center benefit Historic Huntley. Books focus on historic homes and architecture, local and regional history, and the Civil War. CD stock focuses on classical music and historical narratives. Most books are \$2 or \$3; CDs are \$3, two for \$5, or \$2 each for three or more. **To donate books or CDs**, contact Todi Carnes at todicarnes@verizon.net. ❖

House Detective

May 10, 1-2 p.m., adults, \$5. What clues reveal the story of a house? What can architectural details and styles tell us? Examine photographs, artifacts, and the buildings of Historic Huntley. See if you can resolve some of the enduring mysteries of this place.

Make Old-Fashioned Toys at Historic Huntley

May 12, 10-11 a.m., ages 4-adult, \$7. Make simple toys to take home and play games like those enjoyed by the children who once lived at Huntley. Special children's house tour and scavenger hunt included.

Storytime on the Hill

May 18, June 1, or June 15, 7-8 p.m., ages 2-adult, \$5 per child. Bundle up in your jammies and bring blankets to sit on and snuggle in as you listen to stories from long ago, just as the Mason family may have done. Enjoy the sunset and spectacular view from Historic Huntley.

Delicious Dairy at Historic Huntley

May 26, 11 a.m.-12 p.m., ages 2-adult, \$8. Churn your own delicious butter and taste fresh cheese you can make at home.

Bread and Butter Tea

June 2, 3-4:30 p.m., ages 4-adult, \$8, includes a tour of Historic Huntley. The villa must have hosted many afternoon teas. Learn how to churn butter and enjoy simple fare of bread and butter, fruit, and pot cheese. Teddy bears, dolls, and trucks are welcomed!

Taux Trail for Homeschoolers

June 4, 1-3 p.m., ages 6-12, \$12. Spend time immersed in the lifeways of Virginia Indians 400 years ago. Grind corn, make a clay pot, and master corn darts.

Ice Cream at Historic Huntley

June 9, 2-3 p.m., ages 2-adult, \$8. Make and enjoy hand-cranked ice cream as Huntley's Harrison family may have done.

FRIENDS OF HISTORIC HUNTLEY

P.O. Box 7241

Alexandria, VA 22307-0241

Address correction requested

Save the Dates:

Discovery Day—April 14

Tea at Historic Huntley—May 14

Educational programs for all ages

Huntley-Related Web Sites

www.historichuntley.org

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/historic-huntley

www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org

Tour Historic Huntley

Enjoy southern Fairfax County's most scenic outlook at **Historic Huntley, the small house with a big view.** A Fairfax County Park Authority site, the property is on the National Register of Historic Places, the Virginia Landmarks Register, and the Fairfax County Inventory of Historic Sites. Tour on Saturdays from April through October, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and by appointment. *\$5 adults; \$3 children and seniors; under 5, free.* The grounds are open from dawn to dusk from March through November.

For more information, call 703.768.2525 or go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/historic-huntley. ❖

FOHH as a Beneficiary

Have you thought of leaving something to FOHH in your will or as a beneficiary of part or all of the remains of a retirement account? While FOHH can accept small donations, the Fairfax County Park Foundation—www.fairfaxparkfoundation.org—is best-equipped to handle larger ones. It is a nonprofit dedicated to raising

funds for and distributing them to the Fairfax County Park Authority, which owns Historic Huntley. To ensure your funds will only be used in support of Historic Huntley, have your estate planning attorney expressly include this limitation on the gift. For more information, contact Roberta “Bobbi” Longworth at roberta.longworth@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703.324.8581. As they say, “You can’t take it with you”—but you can leave a legacy to Historic Huntley through the Fairfax County Park Foundation. ❖

Join Friends of Historic Huntley today!

Support Historic Huntley by joining this group of history- and historic preservation-minded people. Members receive the newsletter, an invitation to a members-only event, and a 10% discount on FOHH merchandise. FOHH is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Membership dues and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. With your volunteer efforts and financial support, we can make a difference.

Name _____ Tel _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Email _____ May we email *Huntley Headlines*? _____

- \$15 Individual \$20 Family \$10 Student/Senior
 \$150 Lifetime Membership Additional donation _____
 New Member **Renewing Member** **Total enclosed** _____

I'm interested in volunteering in the following area(s):

HH (work with staff at HMP): Docent Greeter Research

FOHH: Fundraising Program Planning Public Relations Special Events

Send completed form with check payable to *Friends of Historic Huntley* to:
FOHH, P.O. Box 7241, Alexandria, VA 22307-0241

Huntley Headlines is produced by Friends of Historic Huntley, a local citizens group formed to preserve Historic Huntley and related cultural resources through advocacy and education.

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Address changes:

Please send your mailing label with corrections to the address above or to FOHHuntley@aol.com.