

Menotomy Minutes



NEWSLETTER OF THE ARLINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AUTUMN 2018



PRINCE HALL, his namesake cemetery, and monument

by Howard Winkler, Past President

Prince Hall was an African American who lived in Boston during the last half of the eighteenth century. He was an abolitionist, an agitator for civil rights, an educator, and founder of Black Freemasonry. Hall was one of the most prominent African American citizens of the time. He was born in Bridgetown, Barbados, around 1735, the son of a white planter and a free woman of African and French descent. At age seventeen he found passage to Boston where he became employed as a leather worker. In 1762, he joined the Congregational Church on School Street. He was married three times and had two children.

In early 1775, Hall petitioned to become a member of Boston's St. John's Lodge of Freemasons but was turned away, presumably because of race. Not to be deterred, Hall and fourteen other black men approached a British army lodge of Freemasons attached to the 38th Regiment of Foot and were initiated into their lodge on March 6, 1775. After the evacuation of Boston on March 17, 1776, the African American Masons could meet as a lodge, but full recognition would be withheld for years.

In 1777, Hall petitioned the Massachusetts General Court to abolish slavery, but this law did not pass until 1783. Hall

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Memorial Day 2018. Yves R. Maignan, Most Worshipful Grand Master of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge greets Stuart Brorson, President of the Arlington Historical Society.

President's Corner

Hello Society Members,

Most Arlingtonians know that the Society owns and operates the Jason Russell House as a museum for the benefit of the public at large. While the house is always in plain sight, the Society also maintains in its collection many historical artifacts and items. We have photos and postcards; letters, receipts, and other documents related to everyday life; items of furniture, household appliances, sermons, books, pieces of buildings, and many other interesting things which tell a story about Arlington's history. Some items go back to the 18th and 17th centuries—links to our distant recorded past.

For several years, we have been documenting each item in our collection using a database which allows us to make searches when entering specific keywords. This work has been performed by our director Sara Lundberg and a team of many volunteers who have tirelessly catalogued and entered information into the database. I am grateful to all our volunteers who have done this work.

Now I am pleased to announce that a portion of our collection database is accessible to the general public online. Sara has selected a subset of all items in the database which have enough information so that they are useful to scholars and researchers investigating Arlington's history. These items have been uploaded onto a server run by PastPerfect and can now be accessed via your web browser at <https://arlingtonhistorical.org/collection>.

Please check out our online collection! Choosing the "random image" option and then clicking around to view all the interesting objects is a fun way to browse the collection. It's easy to spend lots of time engrossed in the objects -- some are evocative, while others raise questions which are probably unanswerable. And just about all of them will spark your imagination. They provide a great way for you to connect with Arlington's history, which has always been a key goal of the Society.

My best regards, Stuart Brorson

"Lest We Forget" A Tribute to Stu Galley

by Richard A. Duffy

We were deeply saddened by the passing of Stu Galley on August 2, following a brief illness.

Soon after the Society acquired at auction the 1900 diary of its founder, George Y. Wellington, Stu had the vision of transcribing the entries and posting them daily in the year 2000 on the Arlington List, an email group reaching thousands of readers. Following Stu's retirement in 2006, he began transcribing the century-old diaries of Susanna Adams Winn or her niece, Nina L. Winn, giving us intimate looks at their thoughts and lives exactly one century earlier to the day. His final diary post to the Arlington List was for Nina Winn's diary entry of July 4, 1918.

Stu was a software engineer with degrees from CalTech and MIT. This might seem unlikely background for someone who would devote many years to antique paper-and-ink. But it was a perfect fit. Stu was a founder of Infocom, recognized in the 1980s as one of the greatest producers of text-only interactive fiction computer games. The limited text-only format of the Arlington List got a visual boost with Stu's

transcriptions, where he conveyed through symbols the manuscript qualities of what he saw on the original diary pages.

In addition to his transcriptions, Stu joined Doreen Stevens and me in March 2011 to present the Society program "Those Diaries We Love." More recently, Stu welcomed guests at a Society "Evening in Arlington" event, to display the vintage volumes and engage in person with fans of the diaries.

To experience the diaries in a manner of "real time," Stu never read ahead of the day he was transcribing. So Stu never saw the Nina Winn 1918 diary entry corresponding to the last day of his life, August 2. But it was one that would have delighted him with descriptions of civilian experience in World War I, such as the inflationary leap in trolley car fare from a nickel to seven cents, Nina choosing a toy submarine for her nephew's ninth birthday, and frying her supper

potatoes in Wesson Oil, because meat fats were scarce. And when I reached August 3 in Nina's diary it felt as if she was observing a moment of silence for Stu; unusually, that page was entirely blank. ❖

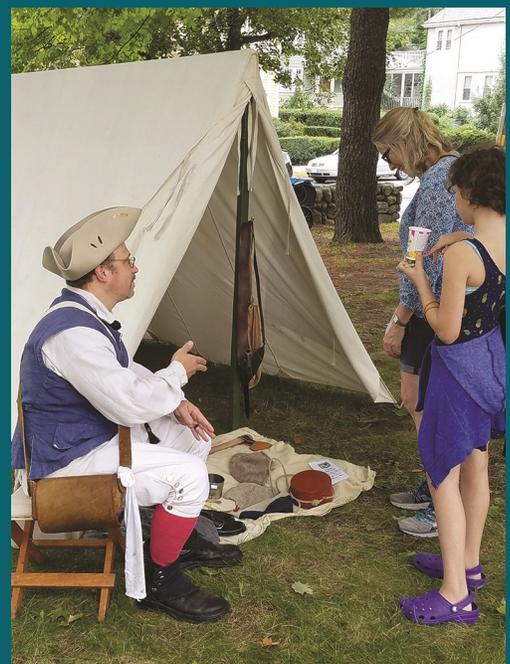
Stu Galley's devotion to transcribing the historical diaries is being carried on today. If you would like to receive a daily email of the 1918 diary (without needing to subscribe to the Arlington List), please send a message to richard@arlingtonhistorical.org to be added to the "bcc list" (your address will not be visible to others).



The cover and each page of Nina Winn's 1918 diary bore the inscription "Lest We Forget"—an expression on the minds of many during the appalling losses of World War I. The sentiment and floral motif would prove enduring, as seen in this detail from Nina's 1930 diary, both published by The Standard Diary Co. of Cambridge, Mass.

Town Day 2018

We were pleased to offer a variety of activities for Arlington Town Day. The Jason Russell House and Smith Museum were open to visitors free of charge, and we had a variety of demonstrations on the lawn. Special thanks to the Menotomy Minutemen who offered musket firing demonstrations, cartridge making and musket ball casting, corn husk doll making, and a variety of items for children to play with. We also hosted special presenter Nancy Bell and her "Spinning History" program. This visual arts and women's history performance illustrates the role the art of spinning played in the American Revolution. Dressed in carefully researched, hand-sewn, historically accurate clothing, she demonstrated three kinds of spinning from the "Great Wheel" to the "drop spindle" and teaches that true "independence" came about in part because women were instrumental in creating and replacing the existing textile economies in the colonies by learning to spin. ❖





On Memorial Day 1998, John Maddox, Jr., then Most Worshipful Grand Master of Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, delivers an address at the cemetery.

Prince Hall (Continued from page 1)

protested the denial of free schools for African American children whose families paid taxes and had the right to attend school, and he established a school for black children in his house, recruiting two students from Harvard College to serve as teachers.

In 1784, after a series of appeals to the London Grand Lodge, full recognition was achieved to establish African Lodge No. 459, and Hall became the lodge's worshipful master. In 1788 Hall drafted a petition signed by Quakers and Boston clergy expressing outrage at the abduction by slave traders of three black men in Boston. Diplomatic action that followed secured the release of these men from the French island of St. Bartholomew.

Hall remained both a community leader and head of the masonic lodge until his death in 1807. He was interred at Copp's Hill Burying Ground in Boston, and an obelisk marks his grave.

There is a link that connects Arlington to Prince Hall. Alan Jones, the treasurer of the Arlington Historical Society and a member of the Mystic Valley Masonic Lodge called my attention to a speech made by Hall that he found in the Library of Congress's "African American Odyssey." It is "A Charge Delivered to the African Lodge," June 24, 1797 at Menotomy, by The Right Worshipful Prince Hall. Unfortunately, there is no record of exactly where Hall delivered his charge. It is possible that he gave his lecture in the Menotomy home of a member of the African Lodge, or at some other venue.

By the 1850s, Copp's Hill Burying Ground in Boston was

filled and had fallen into disuse. The black Masons needed a place to bury their members and loved ones, and they found a small lot, two-tenths of an acre, in West Cambridge (today's Arlington) on what is now Gardner Street. The land was purchased from Davis Locke in 1856 by William B. Kendall, then Grand Master of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge. In 1864, Kendall sold the land to the lodge with headquarters in Boston to be held by the lodge "for a masonic Burial Ground ... to be known as the Prince Hall Mystic Cemetery." In 1868, Arlington Town Meeting voted to allow the cemetery association "to locate and maintain a cemetery in the northeasterly part of the town." The motion was made by William E. Parmenter, District Deputy Grand Master of the Hiram Lodge of Masons in Arlington.

The Grand Lodge used the cemetery from 1870 to about 1897, during which time there were perhaps six burials. Of the likely six, only two names are known. The exact locations of the individual graves are unknown. The lodge's record-keeping was poor, and some records were misplaced when the lodge moved from Boston to its present location in Dorchester. The cemetery was not convenient for Boston families, and closer cemeteries were found. Families move away or die off, and the cemetery was forgotten. In 1953, Catherine and Ralph Chandler purchased the lot from the lodge, which did not have it recorded as a cemetery. In 1960, the Chandlers decided to build a house on the lot, but the town would not issue a building permit because of the parcel's status as a cemetery. The Chandlers' money was returned. Because the lot appeared abandoned, during the development of the surrounding lots it was used by builders as a storage site, and whatever cemetery

features may have existed would have been obliterated. In 1959, I moved with my family to 47 Gardner Street. Across the street was an empty lot, the only one in the neighborhood. I recall asking my landlord and neighbors about the lot, but its origin and owner were unknown to them. None of us thought of going to the Arlington assessor's office to determine its owner. It was not until May 27, 1971 that I and many others learned about its history in a Boston Globe article entitled "It had its beginning in prejudice...now it's just a haunting memory."

Another article appeared in the April 28, 1988 issue of the Arlington Advocate, "Historic cemetery draws little notice," and slowly the recognition that there was a cemetery on Gardner Street seeped into the public's mind. Arlington Historical Society President Phillip Hagar pointed to the significance of a group of black citizens needing to purchase by possible subterfuge a cemetery far from where they lived. Grand Master William Kendall's purchase of the land in 1856 as an individual was probably a "straw sale," pending its ultimate ownership by the Prince Hall Grand Lodge as an organization. Hagar formed a committee of which I was a member and contacted the lodge. Inga Pinciak and Charles (Bert) Walker were appointed by the society and the Prince Hall Lodge, respectively, as their lead persons. The objective was to establish a state charter for joint maintenance of the cemetery, which would continue to be owned by the lodge. The Prince Hall Mystic Arlington Cemetery Association (PHMACA) consequently was formed and a charter was granted by the Commonwealth. Alan McClennen, then Arlington's director of planning, told me that there was a good possibility that Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds could be made available to improve the cemetery. Walker met with McClennen and \$25,350 was granted to upgrade the cemetery, which along with money from the Prince Hall Lodge, enabled the purchase of a wrought iron fence along Gardner Street, a cyclone fence on the other three sides, a polished black granite marker, and funding for a historical survey of the cemetery. The lodge hired the Center for Archeological Studies at Boston University to conduct a geophysical survey and archival study of the cemetery. The report is available at the Arlington Historical Society and Robbins Library. This study was key to the successful acceptance of the cemetery to the National Register of Historical Places in 1998.

On June 2, 1990, fifty Prince Hall Lodge Masons in full regalia, and members of the Arlington Historical Society marched from the Jason Russell House to Gardner Street to rededicate the Prince Hall Cemetery. Every Memorial Day the Masons and members of the Arlington Historical Society gather

at the cemetery for a remembrance ceremony, at which its president is one of the speakers. Everyone is invited to attend this annual commemoration.

The Lodge was granted permission to build a memorial to Prince Hall on the Cambridge Common. I was asked to serve on the Monument Committee, and invited Alan Jones to serve with me. Ted Clausen of Cambridge designed the imaginative memorial, consisting of five six-foot tall granite slabs. The words inscribed on the inside are those of Prince Hall, and words on the outside are of other black Americans. The memorial was unveiled on May 10, 2010. It is located on the Garden Street side of the Common, near the Revolutionary War era cannons. The monument pays homage to a very worthy American who would otherwise be forgotten. ❖

*...give the right hand of affection and fellowship
to whom it justly belongs; let the colour
or complexion be what it will, let their nation
be what it may, for they are your brethren
and it is your indispensable duty so to do ...*

from Prince Hall's Charge, 1797



Prince Hall Monument on the Cambridge Common.

The information about Prince Hall was drawn from the American National Biography, Oxford Univ. Press, c.1999. An original printing of Prince Hall's lecture at Menotomy can be viewed on-line at the Library of Congress website, via this Internet link: <http://bit.ly/PrinceHallCharge>



2018
❖
AHS
Cocktail
Party



Upcoming Lectures

Our regular location for our Tuesday 7:30 p.m. programs will be the Masonic Temple, 19 Academy Street (disabled access is at rear).

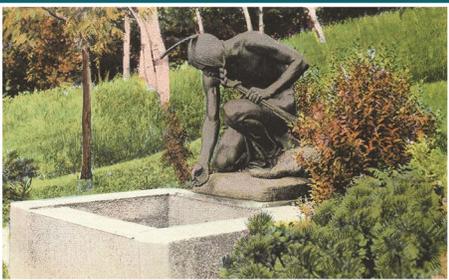


Tuesday, October 30

HABITAT WILDLIFE SANCTUARY & ITS CONNECTION TO ARLINGTON

Janet Ford and Lolly Bennett

A century ago Arlingtonian Ruth Hornblower moved as a bride to her new home on 84 acres in Belmont whose legacy is a Massachusetts Audubon Society environmental education site -- discover its history!



Thursday, November 29

NATIVE AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY AND CULTURE

Ellen Berkland and Faries Gray

Co-sponsored with Cyrus E. Dallin Museum

To observe Native American Heritage Month, learn how indigenous people thrived in our area for thousands of years, and about the Massachusetts tribe of Ponkapoag's work today to preserve and share its language, culture, and traditions.

Emergency Hospital

by Richard A. Duffy

During the Spanish Influenza pandemic of 1918, hundreds of Arlingtonians were stricken. Symmes Hospital quickly exceeded its capacity. Many victims could not be cared for at their homes, even with the support of visiting nurses. At the peak of the crisis in Arlington, the Board of Trade (predecessor of today's Arlington Chamber of Commerce) offered for use as an emergency hospital the former Bryant mansion-house at 10 Court St., which it had purchased in 1916 for its headquarters.

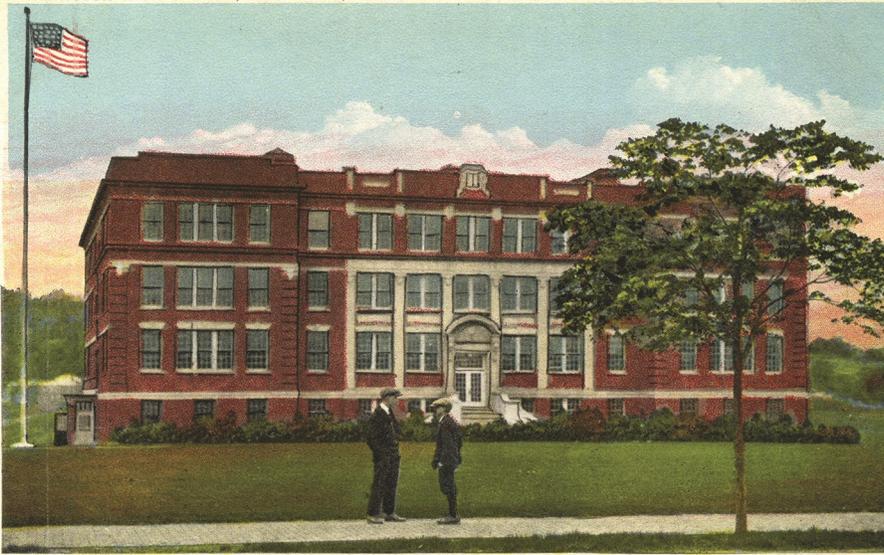


Operated under the supervision of the Arlington Board of Health, the emergency hospital opened on October 5 as an all-volunteer enterprise. Twenty cots and four cribs accommodated the patients; townspeople donated clothing and other needed supplies; vegetables and other provisions were contributed that two girls from the high school prepared on kitchen equipment loaned by the Arlington Gas Light Company; and teaching nuns from St. Agnes School provided much of the bedside nursing care. After serving 40 patients—all of whom were discharged in good health—the emergency hospital was closed on October 16, 1918.

As for the Bryant house, the Board of Trade found that it was not providing as much service to the organization as originally envisioned, so it was leased for many years to the U.S. government as a branch laboratory of its entomological service, a fitting location both because Arlington was still a center for market gardening, and the Frost Insecticide Company was a close neighbor. In 1935 the Bryant estate and an adjacent home to the north were razed to make way for the U.S. Post Office that occupies the site today. ❖

Richard Duffy will present an encore of his lecture "Arlington in 1918: A Centennial Look at a Most Remarkable Year," at the Old Schwamb Mill on Saturday, October 27, at 2:00 p.m.

ARLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL, ARLINGTON, MASS.



This circa 1915 postcard of Arlington High School was made from a black-and-white photograph that was overprinted in color. While this process obscured some detail, it has vintage appeal. Note the different dress of the two boys: long pants for the one at left, and knickers on the fellow at right.

Contact Us

Office Hours:

Tues-Thurs 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

7 Jason Street

Arlington, MA 02476-6410

(781) 648-4300

contact@arlingtonhistorical.org

Visit us on the web at

www.arlingtonhistorical.org

AHS Newsletter team: Sara Lundberg, Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Carolyn Parsons, Doris Birmingham, Richard Duffy, and Stuart Brorson.

The Society welcomes submissions to Menotomy Minutes. If you wish to submit an article, please contact the Society to discuss your piece prior to submission. We cannot guarantee when or if your article will be published. All articles are edited for publication.

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Arlington Historical Society
7 Jason Street
Arlington, MA 02476-6410