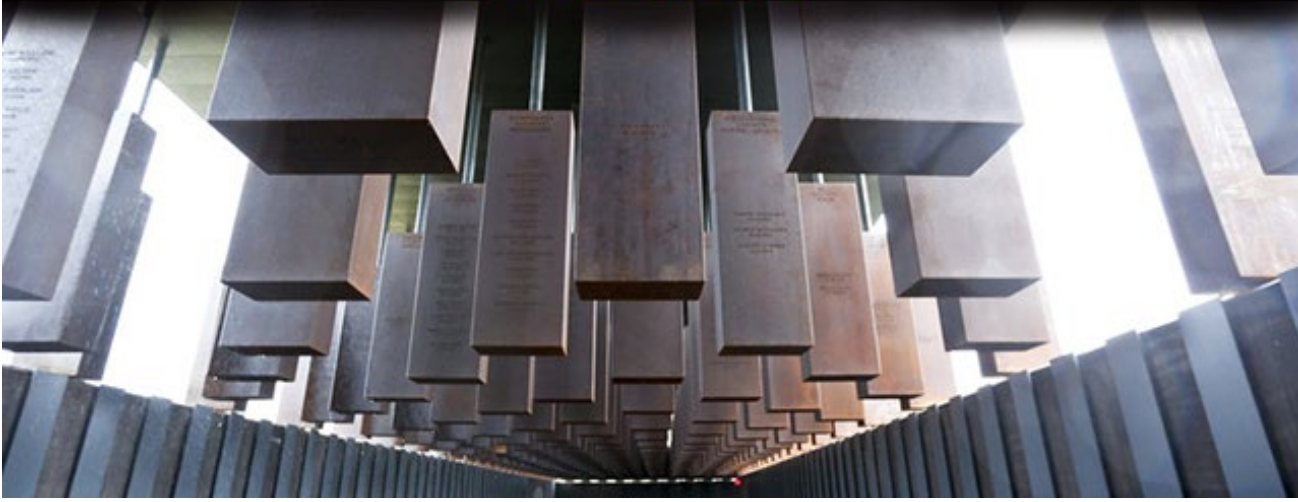


ALEXANDRIA COMMUNITY REMEMBRANCE PROJECT NEWSLETTER



February 2024 Edition

This Sunday!

Film Screening, “Bloodlines of the Slave Trade”

Sunday, February 25, 6 p.m. doors open, film begins 6:30 p.m.

The Alexandria History Museum at the Lyceum (201 S. Washington St.)

Cost: \$15 [purchase in advance](#) or at the door.

This 73-minute documentary related to Historic Alexandria’s important work at 1315 Duke Street at the Freedom House Museum, will be followed with a moderated panel discussion led by Councilman John Chapman that includes film subjects Susanna Grannis and Melanie Pflaum as well as ACRP Co-Chair and Director of Alexandria’s African American History Division Audrey Davis.

“Rodney (who is Black) and Susanna (who is white) have very different lived experiences as their slave trading ancestors continue to impact their lives. Susanna’s grandfather was named for Issac Franklin and John Armfield, the largest traders of enslaved African Americans in the nation between 1828 and 1836, and Rodney is a descendant of John Armfield. The Freedom House Museum in Old Town, the original headquarters of the Armfield Franklin slave trading company, traces the history of human trafficking in Alexandria and the South. “While we celebrate Black History this month,” said Alexandria Film Festival Chair Dara Sanders, “this film is every bit as much about Alexandria’s history, and how we negotiate the legacy of our beloved city.”

Don't miss this great opportunity to delve into the complex interplay of history and present-day reality.

Feature Story

The Snowden Family: Producers of their Time

Part 2: 1860-1865

In the second decade of the 21st century, the Office of Historic Alexandria has dedicated itself to expanding the interpretation of this city’s African American experience weaving it into the stories we share about our past. Just this month, OHA and the Alexandria Black History Museum launched *Alexandria at War 1861-1865: African American Emancipation In An Occupied City*, an anthology that explores what life was like for African Americans living here during the war. Alexandrians are coming to understand that while white people enforced a racial hierarchy and segregation in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, our contemporary view of this

past need not be segregated, African American history is our history.

Up until recent years, most of the stories Alexandria told about itself reflected those recorded by white historians who researched primary sources such as the *Alexandria Gazette*. A newspaper that reported on the experience of white people in this city into the last century. It was founded and edited by members of the Snowden family for more than 100 years. The Snowden's went from Federalists to secessionist Confederates and the newspaper they produced left future generations with a slightly skewed record of the past. When Union Forces controlled the city in the 1860s, stories of white defiance and hardship were emphasized while thousands of stories of self-liberated Black Alexandrians and white residents who wanted to remain part of the United States were minimized or completely ignored. Once the vote to secede was cast in Richmond, the pro-union Alexandrians disappear, at least initially, from the pages of the *Gazette*.

Past historians allowed Alexandria to rationalize the city's part in the multi-state insurrection that was launched to protect the right to enslave Black people, by emphasizing that before Virginia's secession vote locals didn't want to leave the United States, which was true. Most Alexandrians didn't want to go to war and were critical of South Carolina's rash decision to leave the Union. We have been told that the white men who voted to secede on May 23, 1861, did so because they didn't want to obey President Lincoln's order to prepare to send less than 3,000 soldiers (statewide) for 90 days to quell the Palmetto's rebellion. That is why, it has been said, they voted to secede. This implies Alexandrians were okay with going to war with their neighbors across the Potomac, with whom they shared not only a culture, but geographical boundaries just 15 years earlier.

This version of history overlooks the very real and present issue of slavery. A system of labor and profit so large, so infused into local life, that a threat to it was meaningful to a significant number of white Alexandrians. Southern states, slave holding states, were under threat as Northern states were actively trying to stop slavery from spreading, according to Edgar Snowden who hammered home his distaste for the North, disgust for abolitionists, and support for slavery day after day in the *Gazette*.

This version of history disregards the 106 Alexandrians who voted, despite intimidation from the secessionist press, to stay in the United States. It fails to tell the story from the point of view of our shared history, which makes the following clear: a minority of Alexandrians, 980 white men, just seven percent of the city's total population, with the *Gazette* as megaphone, chose insurrection against the United States. They chose to go to war to protect to the death the right to enslave people. Approximately 11,800 white women and children as well as Free and enslaved Black Alexandrians were not given the opportunity to register their choice. This voting minority doomed *all* Alexandrians to four long years of war and occupation.

After the vote, during the occupation, the often repeated history of Alexandria focused on the hardships experienced by white residents whose liberties were curbed while living under martial law. This history lionized the Snowdens who suffered harassment and the destruction of their property by rogue U.S. troops. When in fact, Edgar Snowden, his sons Edgar Jr. and Harold were agents of their own misery. The senior Snowden used the newspaper to rally Alexandrians to vote unanimously for secession and to carry news about the rebel government. Edgar Jr., a member of the Common Council when US forces arrived, refused to take an oath of allegiance, also reported on and legitimized Virginia's illegal legislature, the Confederate Congress and the Confederate President, supported Confederate families and likely engaged in collusion and conspiracy for which he was more than once imprisoned. Dr. Harold Snowden, took up arms as a Confederate soldier and served as Alexandria's representative in Virginia's rebel legislature.

Romanticizing the resistance of white southern sympathizers who lived in Alexandria during and after the Civil War, while leaving untold the history of unionist and Black Alexandrians is an injustice.

[Follow this link to read the second part of the Producers of their Time series](#) that attempts to share another way to look at the choices made by Alexandria during the years of Civil War, and the voices and options that were ignored by the paper of record. Part 1 of this research ran in the [December Newsletter](#).

In The News

Alexandria Community Remembrance Project Co-Chair Audrey Davis was interviewed for a story about Virginia's Black History Museums and the important role of the people who run them. [Read it here](#). Read about the ribbon cutting on the Northern end of the [African American Waterfront Heritage Trail](#) along the Potomac River.

Upcoming Events

Dr. Phelton Moss on Education Equity

Friday, February 23, 6:30 p.m.

Auditorium at Alexandria City High School, King Street

Organized by ACRP Members Leslie Jones and RaAlim Shabazz, this community Black History event at the high school should be very interesting. Dr. Phelton Moss, has an impressive background in education policy, he will be speaking about the importance of equity, a concept that has been under attack in recent years.

Finding the Family of Joseph McCoy

Sunday, February 25, 2 p.m.

Alexandria Black History Museum (902 Wythe St.)

Admission: Free, please [Register here](#)

Join us at the Alexandria Black History Museum this Sunday at 2 p.m. and learn how Genealogist Char McCargo Bah tracked down family members of Joseph McCoy. Bah will share some of the secrets to investigating a family tree when there are few leads. Last month, Grace Hale encouraged both Black and white Alexandrians to discover their ancestry and become more intimate with our shared past.

Meaningful Conversations:

Join the conversation once a month to explore and celebrate the diversity of cultures and peoples in our area, confront the attitudes and behaviors that still divide us with the goal of finding remedies that bring us together. The conversations are facilitated and are respectful, honest, and thoughtful focused on race relations, social justice, and more.

Welcoming the Stranger: An Interfaith Perspective on Immigration and Refugees

Thursday, February 29, 7 p.m.

Alexandria Black History Museum (902 Wythe St.)

Admission: Free and no pre-registration required

Islamophobia and Anti-Arab Bias

March 28, 7 p.m.

Alexandria Black History Museum(902 Wythe St.)

Admission: Free and no pre-registration required

Committee Reports

The Alexandria Community Remembrance Project Steering Committee met at the Black History Museum on Feb. 6 and were updated on the ongoing work of ACRP.

The Planning Committee for the Joseph McCoy Remembrance met at the Lloyd House on Feb. 15 and continued planning events to be held around the McCoy Remembrance of April 23, 2024.

Upcoming Committee Meetings

The Alexandria Community Remembrance Project Steering Committee will meet March 5 at 5 p.m. at Alexandria's Black History Museum.

The Planning Committee for the Joseph McCoy Remembrance will meet at the Lloyd House on Mar. 21 at 12 p.m.

[Joseph McCoy](#) [Benjamin Thomas](#).

[For more information](#)

[Donate to the Project](#)

ACRP@alexandriava.gov

The Alexandria Community Remembrance Project (ACRP) is a city-wide initiative dedicated to helping

Alexandria understand its history of racial terror hate crimes and to work toward creating a welcoming community bound by equity and inclusion.

**Office of Historic Alexandria
City of Alexandria, Virginia**



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