

Historic Alexandria

— QUARTERLY —





alexandria commemorates America's 250th



Alexandria Town Crier, Ben Fiore-Walker, opens the February 9 Launch of "Alexandria Commemorates America's 250th."

MISSION

The Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) preserves and shares Alexandria's past to enrich the present and inspire the future.

VISION

To infuse Alexandria's rich and complex history into the fabric of the community.

VALUES

Equity

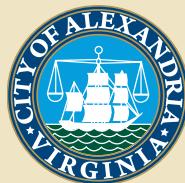
- Engages in scholarship and research-driven content.
- Acknowledges that history is complex and embraces dialogue

Community

- Offers compelling and innovative research-driven experiences for both residents and visitors.
- Builds community by fostering understanding and civic value.

Collaboration

- Actively seeks community partnerships and input.
- Offers resources for community projects, planning, and decisions.



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Dear Friends of Historic Alexandria,

On the heels of celebrating the 275th anniversary of the founding of the City of Alexandria in 2024, we launched into the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Fairfax Resolves on July 18, 2024 - a precursor to the start of the American Revolution. On October 16, 2024, we marked the 200th anniversary of the return of The Marquis de Lafayette to Alexandria. At the invitation of President James Monroe, Lafayette was the nation's guest and spent 13 months traveling the United States and ultimately spending his first and final days of his grand tour in our fair city.

With these great commemorations and events behind us, we are looking ahead to the 2026 Semiquincentennial of the founding of the United States. Marking this important moment in our nation's history, reflecting on all 250 years and the diverse stories of the role Alexandrians have played in the national narrative, is where our staff is now turning its attention.

We formally kicked off the 250th Commemoration on February 9th with a Launch event (see the cover photo!), followed by the annual George Washington Birthday Parade, with the theme of Virginia's Son ~ America's Founding Father, on February 14th.

Special this year, we will be offering an updated Alexandria guidebook, new programming and tours, refreshed exhibits, and a signature 250th exhibition, "Stories of U.S.: Collections Capture Our History." In this exhibit at the Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum, you will be able to engage with a wide range of artifacts from throughout the Historic Alexandria collection while examining why museums collect and preserve objects.

The highlight of the celebration will be the three-day festival, Sails on the Potomac. We are proud to be a Sail VirginiaSM 2026 Affiliate Harbor and hosting four ships along the Alexandria Waterfront from June 12 – 14, 2026. The Kalmar Nyckel, Sultana, Gazela, and Tall Ship Providence will help us share the maritime history of our port city and nation. The annual ALX Jazz Fest will celebrate its 48th anniversary as part of the Sails on the Potomac, and our own 250th History Village will be filled with history organizations and activities. Be sure to mark your calendar for the special fireworks display at 9:30 p.m. on Saturday, June 13th.

To learn more about what is happening for the 250th, visit alexandriava.gov/america250 and alexandriava.gov/Sails250.

Warm regards,

Gretchen M. Bulova
Director
Office of Historic Alexandria



Gretchen Bulova, with Brian Hilton portraying Gen. George Washington and Keynote Speaker Dr. Edward Lengel, at this year's George Washington Birthnight Celebration Banquet.

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New Exhibitions

The Office of Historic Alexandria is marking America's 250th birthday with the opening of four exhibits: *Aboard Ship with the Jack-Tars of the Union Navy* (Fort Ward Museum); *Women in Business: We've Always Been Here* (Gadsby's Tavern Museum); *Disease and the Apothecary* (Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum); and *Stories of U.S.: Collections Capture Our History* (The Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum). Each explores a different facet of Alexandria's history, marking the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the nation's ongoing efforts towards a more perfect Union.

A 250th Salute to the Navy at Fort Ward!



"Aboard Ship with the Jack-Tars of the Union Navy" at Fort Ward Museum.

The U.S. Navy was established on October 13, 1775. To mark its 250th milestone, Fort Ward Museum opened a new exhibit in October 2025. "Aboard Ship with the Jack-Tars of the Union Navy" highlights the important role of the U.S. Navy during the Civil War, with a special focus on the lives and equipment of the seamen who contributed to the war effort.

The Federal Navy, which began as a small and unprepared force at the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, quickly expanded to succeed in blockading over 3,500 miles of Confederate coastline, securing the South's major waterways, and engaging in a number of significant combat operations. By the end of the war in 1865, the U.S. Navy was the world's largest naval force and a key factor in the North's eventual victory.

The strength of the U.S. Navy would not have been possible without the service of



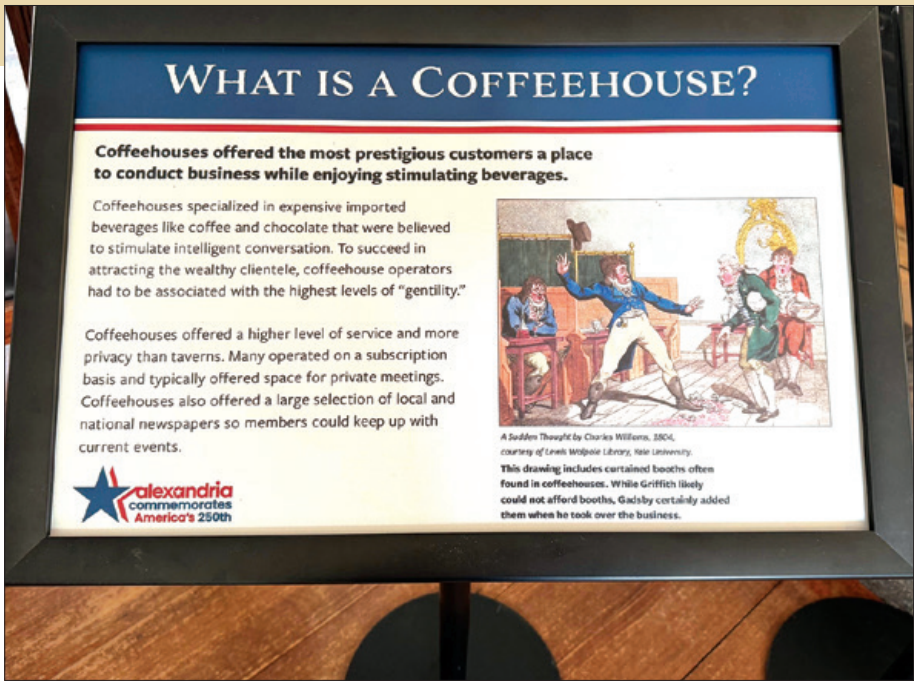
Crew of the USS *Miami*, ca. 1864-1865, Library of Congress.

the thousands of sailors, or “jack-tars,” who manned the ships. The great diversity of a ship’s crew can be seen in photographs featured in the exhibit. A typical crew included men and boys of various ages and ethnic backgrounds, including Black seamen who served on integrated crews. The Union Navy was the first branch of the U.S. military to enlist African Americans, one and a half years before the Army’s official formation of the U.S. Colored Troops in 1863.

The exhibition features examples of the tools, equipment, clothing articles, weapons and personal items used by Union sailors from Fort Ward Museum’s Civil War collection. Major themes focus on naval dress, which identified men by various ranks and roles, communications aboard ship, navigation, and weaponry used in combat. Among the navigational instruments displayed are 19th-century sextants, used to calculate the ship’s longitude and latitude, and a floating compass with attached brass oil lantern. Communication devices, essential to managing the noisy and sometimes harrowing challenges of combat and weather conditions at sea, include an alarm rattle and a Model 1861 signal pistol from the Washington Navy Yard. Among the rare artifacts on view is a personalized memorial marker for an engineer on the USS *Mohican* who was buried at sea after being killed in the Battle of Port Royal, South Carolina in 1861.

The exhibition also includes a special profile on Commander James Harmon Ward, Fort Ward’s namesake, who was the first Union Navy officer to die in the Civil War. Ward was an expert in naval ordnance, a co-founder of the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and commander of the Potomac Flotilla early in the Civil War. His notable 1859 text, *A Manual of Naval Tactics*, is on view in the exhibit.

Women in Business: We Were Always Here



This panel shows what a coffeehouse would look like in comparison to the tavern's public dining room.

Gadsby's Tavern Museum consists of two taverns, the 1785 tavern and the 1792 City Tavern. While the taverns that make up Gadsby's Tavern Museum did not open until after the American Revolution, their stories from the early years of the nation broaden our understanding of the revolution itself and what it means to be a new country. Even though the museum is named after John Gadsby, a male tavernkeeper, when he first operated the 1792 City Tavern, it was Hannah Griffith, a female business owner, who was operating the 1785 tavern.

Griffith operated a coffeehouse in the tavern building, which was a more refined and exclusive alternative to a tavern. Many visitors to the museum are surprised to learn that it was normal for women to operate a hospitality business at this time. In fact, historian Nancy Struna estimates as many as two-thirds of taverns in 17th and 18th century Virginia were operated by women.

Like Griffith, these women were white, from the middling class, and had experience running a business. Where other women operated the business under their husband's name, making it more difficult to find women-operated businesses in the historic record, Griffith was a widow. This gave her more control over her deceased husband's property and allowed her to take out a license to operate the coffeehouse under her own name.



Visitors can learn more about Griffith's story before, during, and after the American Revolution on the second floor of the museum.

Griffith's experiences in widowhood were directly shaped by the American Revolution. Before the war, she married David Griffith, a medical doctor and ordained minister who became a chaplain in the Church of England. Her husband served in the 3rd Virginia Regiment of the Continental Army as both a doctor and chaplain February 1776 through March 1779, leaving her to manage the plantation they lived on as part of the church's land. Historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich uses the term "deputy husband" to describe this experience, where wives on the homefront handled the duties their husband would typically oversee.

The Griffiths moved to the area in 1779 when David became rector of the Fairfax Parish, which included Falls Church and Alexandria Church (now Christ Church). As the American Revolution came to a close, it was not only a new government that needed to be created, but a new church. David traveled to Philadelphia in 1789 for the convention establishing the Episcopal Church, replacing the Church of England. He unexpectedly died while he was there. This left Hannah with eight children, the need to find a new home, and no pension as the church's transition was incomplete.

"Widow Griffith," as she was identified in tax records, moved her family into the town of Alexandria and began operating the coffeehouse in 1794. Her operation of the tavern is part of a long legacy of women-owned businesses in Alexandria. Today, on the streets directly around City Hall alone, there are over 20 women-owned businesses, which are featured as part of the exhibit too. To learn more about Griffith's story and women in business, visit the new exhibit *Women in Business: We Were Always Here*, which opened at Gadsby's Tavern Museum on March 26, 2026.

Disease and the Apothecary

The Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum's newest exhibit explores the history of three deadly diseases and the role that the Apothecary business played in helping to care for the sick during outbreaks in Alexandria.

Yellow fever, smallpox, and influenza were greatly feared in towns

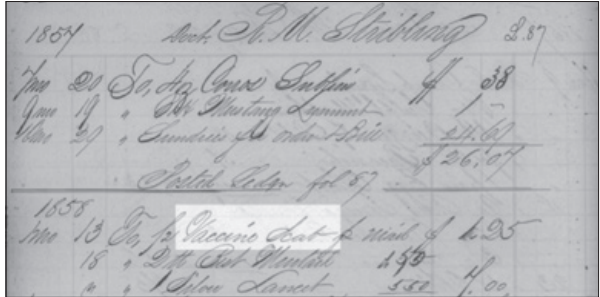
and cities because of their high mortality rates and painful symptoms, and the port city of Alexandria was no exception. Spanning the 18th-20th centuries, this exhibit features objects and archival materials from the museum's collection documenting the devastating effects of these diseases and what medicines were available to locals for treatment.

In 1793, an outbreak of yellow fever in the nation's new capital of Philadelphia caused the death of one of Edward Stabler's biggest medical suppliers, Townsend Speakman. A personal letter from Stabler to his uncle in the waning days of the outbreak asked after Speakman and with whom he should settle his debts to the man's estate. To prevent an outbreak in Alexandria, the local government quarantined ships below the city's main waterfront until they were deemed free of disease.

Smallpox, especially feared for its high fatality rate and disfiguring scars if survived, was addressed locally through inoculation centers during the Revolutionary and Civil Wars and into World War I, where troops and civilians in close quarters were very susceptible to infection. Outside of times of war, City officials and doctors worked to make inoculation against the disease available to all at no cost. An account book details an 1858 smallpox scab order to a nearby Dr. Robert M. Stribling. Orders from Camp Humphrey's in 1918 document the inoculations of troops preparing to deploy during World War I.

The world-wide outbreak of influenza from 1918-1920 led cities everywhere to take measures to stop its spread. Alexandria closed schools, movie theatres, and other public places to discourage further spread of the disease through large gatherings. Remedies like Quybon, a chocolate-coated vegetable tonic, and Bromo Quinine, a fever reducer, claimed to offer relief to families suffering from the disease.

As seen through these orders, letters, and objects, the Stabler and Leadbeater family pharmacy business offered 141 years of relief to locals through medicine and were an important part of the public health measures in Alexandria. To learn more, visit the exhibit on the first floor of the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum.



Order from a Dr. Robert M. Stribling for a smallpox scab for use in his medical practice to vaccinate a patient.

Stories of U.S.: Collections Capture Our History

Opening at the Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum on June 11, this exhibition marks America's 250th anniversary and will showcase a variety of artifacts acquired by the Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA), and how they represent the City's rich and diverse history. The exhibit will feature a range of Historic Alexandria collecting initiatives such as preserving historic sites, acquiring objects such as ceramics, photographs, furniture, and equipment, as well as oral histories. Visitors will be asked to consider how what we save today becomes a record of the world around us. As every artifact helps tell Alexandria's story, it also connects us to our nation's history.

The people who shaped Alexandria over the centuries is an important theme throughout "Stories of U.S." A striking circa 1796 silver coffeepot marked by Adam Lynn will represent the role of artisans and merchants. Lynn was a gold and silversmith, a skilled engraver, a merchant who sold jewelry, military goods, hardware, and real estate speculator. His story represents the developing middle class in Alexandria at the turn of the 19th century, as well as available consumer goods, and civic affairs of the time. Lynn was Justice of the Peace for the Alexandria County Court from 1817 through 1835. His community activities included serving on the vestry of St. Paul's Episcopal Church and membership with the Sun Fire Company and Alexandria Washington Lodge 22. He joined the militia in 1797, was a colonel during the War of 1812, and a general by 1819.

Newly acquired examples of Alexandria-made salt-glazed stoneware will also be on exhibit. This pottery illuminates both local artisans as well as domestic life in the 19th century. It was important equipment in kitchens and pantries, regardless of the householder's ethnic, social, or economic status. Many types of stoneware were made in Alexandria. Two pieces that will be on view are a churn and a three-gallon jar attributed to African American potter David Jarbour. Both have brushed cobalt decorations and were produced circa 1825-1831. They are stamped "H. Smith & Co." for Hugh Smith, the owner of the pottery on Wilkes Street.



Churn marked "H. Smith & Co." attributed to potter David Jarbour, Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum Collection, museum purchase.



"Burial of the Sign, Burying Apartheid Celebration" Photograph by Nina Tisara, Alexandria Black History Museum Collection.

Local history collections can reflect how world or national events have impacted Alexandrians. For example, the exhibit will feature photographs documenting community members expressing solidarity with a global freedom movement. "Procession. Burying Apartheid Celebration," captures Alexandrians marching in solidarity as apartheid, the government-enforced system of racial

segregation in South Africa came to an end in 1994. “Burial of the Sign, Burying Apartheid Celebration,” shows a celebratory gathering marking the end of apartheid where a clergyman is jumping on a symbolic “grave.” These events took place at Meade Memorial Episcopal Church and were recorded by photographer Nina Tisara.



Locomotive Steam Gauge, Fort Ward Museum Collection, museum purchase.

Some artifacts in “Stories of U.S.” were preserved because of family or personal connections, such as one of the Civil War artifacts that will be on view. During the Federal occupation of Alexandria in May 1861, Private David G. Hatch of the 5th Massachusetts Infantry took a steam gauge as a “trophy” from one of two remaining locomotives stranded in the town’s railroad facilities. Hatch returned home to Massachusetts with his war souvenir when he mustered out of his 90-day enlistment. He re-enlisted soon after in the 16th Massachusetts Infantry but would never see his memento from Alexandria again. He was killed July 2, 1863 at the Battle of Gettysburg. As a tribute to his son, Hatch’s father George W. Hatch presented David’s steam

gauge to Post 29 of the Grand Army of the Republic. Post 29 displayed the steam gauge in their veterans’ hall as a memorial to Private Hatch.

Collecting includes preserving memories and reflections shared by people about their past experiences. One of the OHA Oral History Program’s current projects featured in the exhibition will be the Colored Rosemont Community History Initiative. The community once known as “Colored Rosemont” was established in 1926 when real estate broker Virginia F. Thomas sold plots to African American families. Bounded by Pendleton, Fayette, Madison, and West Streets, the area was fully developed by 1939. The term “Colored Rosemont” was used colloquially and is a reminder that Alexandria was racially segregated. Historic Alexandria is working with former and current residents of Colored Rosemont (2022-present) to preserve the historic African American neighborhood.

It was a thriving neighborhood. . . . There were private homes and private homeowners, you know, home owners. And it was a neighborhood full of love and respect.

— Excerpt from Vanessa Greene’s oral history, 2024.

...it was a place of safety...as a little kid, it was like a utopia. It was a place where you go for respite. You know, it’s like, you go out, go to school, do other things you need to do, and you come back there to safety and security. That’s Colored Rosemont.

— Excerpt from Maria Edwards’ oral history, 2024.

“Stories of U.S.: Collections Capture Our History” will highlight the breadth of Historic Alexandria’s collections. Over eighty artifacts and oral histories, from the late 18th century to the present, will be featured. They provide connections to people and their community, illuminating the history of Alexandria and the nation.

In Remembrance



McArthur Myers

Alexandria lost one of its most beloved citizens, McArthur Myers on December 4, 2025, at the age of 73. Known affectionally as Mac - he loved Black History and the City of Alexandria. Mac's dedication and advocacy led him to work with the Office of Historic Alexandria on historic signs and markers around the City. Most recently, he worked with RiverRenew on several new signs about civil rights installed at the Alexandria African American Heritage Park (AAAHP). He was especially interested in highlighting those he called the "Mothers of Alexandria's Civil Rights Movement." This resulted in a new marker in the AAAHP about these women.

Concerned that Alexandria had nothing named in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Mac worked with the director of the George Washington Masonic National Memorial to have the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Bench dedicated on the memorial's grounds. A year later, Mac was surprised when a bench was dedicated in his honor at the Charles Houston Recreation Center.

McArthur Myers was a friend to everyone he met. He cared about history, his community, and more than anything else, he wanted students to love Alexandria history the way he did. McArthur was one of the rare citizens who had pet projects, but worked along with city staff to see them to fruition. McArthur Myers was simply our Citizen Extraordinaire.



Charles Trozzo

Longtime friend and supporter of Historic Alexandria, Charles "Chuck" Trozzo passed away on February 2, 2026 at the age 93. Chuck and his wife, Gail, have been committed volunteers, benefactors, and trusted advisors on many of our Historic Alexandria projects. Chuck served on several commissions and committees throughout his time in Alexandria, most notably from 2004-2014 on the Alexandria Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission (AHRPC), with many years as Chair of the Commission. He oversaw the AHRPC easement gift process for both Gadsby's Tavern Museum and

the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum. We will dearly miss his thoughtful advice, good humor, and his presence at our programs.



ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT JUNE 12–14

From the creation of the Fairfax Resolves to the diverse community of merchants, artisans, and residents who shaped this port town, Alexandria played a significant role in the founding era of the United States. The City of Alexandria is commemorating the 250th anniversary of the

Declaration of Independence through “Sails on the Potomac,” June 12–14 at Waterfront Park (1A Prince St.), including a free fireworks show at 9:30 p.m. on Saturday, June 13. All are welcome at the June 12th noon opening ceremony at Waterfront Park, featuring an opening “Cry” by Town Crier Ben Fiore-Walker, remarks by Mayor Alya Gaskins and VA250 Honorary Chair Carly Fiorina, and a performance by the George Mason University Patriots Fife and Drum Corps.

At this free community event you can view and tour four historic tall ships, including the *Gazela*, *Kalmar Nyckel*, *Tall Ship Providence*, and *Sultana*. Join us for family activities, music, art, and history as we recognize Alexandria’s role in the founding of the United States.

SHIP TOURS AND TICKETS

You can tour the ships for free while they are docked in Alexandria. Free timed tickets are needed for children and adults. Reserve your tickets online in advance at alexandriava.gov/Sails250. A walk-up line will be available, but entry is not guaranteed without a ticket.

EXPERIENCE ALX JAZZ FEST

The annual ALX Jazz Fest will celebrate its 48th year as part of Sails on the Potomac! Three days of music kicks off on Friday, June 12 at noon.

EACH DAY FEATURES A DIFFERENT MUSIC THEME

- Friday, June 12 (Noon–6 p.m.): Americana Roots
- Saturday, June 13 (Noon–9 p.m.): American Jazz and Poetry
- Sunday, June 14 (Noon–6 p.m.): Future Sounds of America

WHAT TO BRING

The festival takes place at Waterfront Park. You are welcome to bring lawn chairs, blankets, and picnics. Food will also be available to buy. Leashed pets are allowed to enjoy the event, but only service animals are allowed aboard the historic ships. Please be mindful of the noise and large crowds.

PLAN YOUR VISIT

We encourage you to walk, bike, or take public transit to the waterfront. For full details on parking, transit, and tickets, visit alexandriava.gov/Sails250





SPECIAL Alexandria 250th MERCHANDISE

Now available at the Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum and Gadsby's Tavern Museum, including the 2026 Bicentennial Tree Ornament. Expected this June is an updated Guide to Historic Alexandria. Be sure to purchase your copy!

The City of Alexandria, in partnership with the Beautification Commission, is commemorating America250 by encouraging residents and businesses to plant red, white, and blue native plants. These "patriotic gardens" were also planted in 1976 for the nation's Bicentennial.

When you plant red, white, and blue natives this year, you're turning the America250 historic milestone into an opportunity for collective action—nurturing democracy while planting the seeds for a more resilient and sustainable future.



For an information flyer and to let us know you are planting for America250, visit alexandriava.gov/America250

FIRST LEGO League (FLL) Competition



Left: Garrett Fesler, Deputy City Archaeologist, consults with a team at the Old Town Farmers' Market. **Middle:** One team developed an AI-based monitoring system to detect signs of damage, vandalism, or looting at archaeological sites. They worked with staff to test their project using the submerged ship timbers in Ben Brenman Park. **Right:** Students at George Washington Middle School took part in the regional competition.

This fall, archaeologists throughout the country were inundated with requests from students participating in the FIRST LEGO League (FLL) competition. The international educational challenge for ages six through sixteen promotes teamwork and the engineering design process. Each year, a new real-world problem is chosen for teams to tackle. This year's theme required teams to come up with an "Innovative Solution" to a problem that archaeologists face.

Alexandria Archaeology scrambled to respond, helping 64 teams from as far away as Kazakhstan to our very own public schools in Alexandria. A new online resource page was created to help meet the demand, and staff met with students at outreach events, provided hands-on programs in the museum, and advised groups on their unique Innovative Solutions through email and virtual conversations.

City Archaeologists were impressed and inspired by the teamwork and creative solutions. Some teams focused on robotic screeners or excavators to help with fieldwork, while others problem-solved ways to preserve artifacts in the lab. Many teams chose to build websites like a digital repository for artifacts and field and lab records, or apps like DigSafe which helps address harassment and misconduct in the profession. One team is going to the FLL World Competition this spring. Their web-based tool encourages critical thinking and uses AI to analyze archaeological claims.



The team that developed the PseudoScape Detector is headed to the FIRST LEGO League World Competition in April. psuedoscape.com/the-detector

The teams were surprised to learn about the many technologies that archaeologists currently use, as well as just how many subfields and specializations exist within the field. FLL's competition has fostered a greater appreciation and deeper understanding of archaeology. With their annual global reach of over 650,000 students, the future of archaeology is promising!

OHA in The Community



Left: Black History Month concert with the Washington Revels Jubilee Voices, Courtesy Lois Kebe. **Middle:** MLK Student Art Exhibition at the Charles Houston Rec Center. **Right:** Volunteers work with 18th century Alexandria store ledgers during the February Transcribe-A-Thon at Gadsby's Tavern Museum.



Left: Students try their hand at dendrochronology at the Mount Vernon Community School Science Night in March. **Middle:** Ferdinand T. Day students test ship timber models to track their preservation during a February STEM night. **Right:** Interns and staff designed and installed five new mini exhibits and activities in the new Alexandria Archaeology Museum collections drawers.



FOAA won 3rd place in the Community Spirit category during the George Washington Birthday Parade.

Tavern Games Night, Lafayette theme! Hosted in collaboration with the Alexandria-Caen Sister City Committee in the Gadsby's Ballroom.



EVENTS CALENDAR!

For more events, visit the Historic Alexandria calendar on our website by scanning the QR code.



Historic Alexandria

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