



City of Alexandria
Office of Historic Alexandria
Alexandria Legacies
Oral History Program



Project Name: *Alexandria Legacies-Gerald Ford Oral History Project*

Title: *Interview with Hood Barringer*

Date of Interview: *June 17, 2007*

Location of Interview: *At Mrs. Barringer's home in Alexandria, Virginia*

Interviewer: *Tara Giuliano*

Transcriber: *Tara Giuliano*

Abstract: Hood Barringer was born in 1917 in Washington, D.C. and moved to Alexandria, Virginia later in life. Hood was an active member in many Alexandria committees, and participated in events through the Lyceum. She is also a former neighbor to the late President Gerald Ford. Hood Barringer gave an hour of her time on her 90th birthday to share these stories.

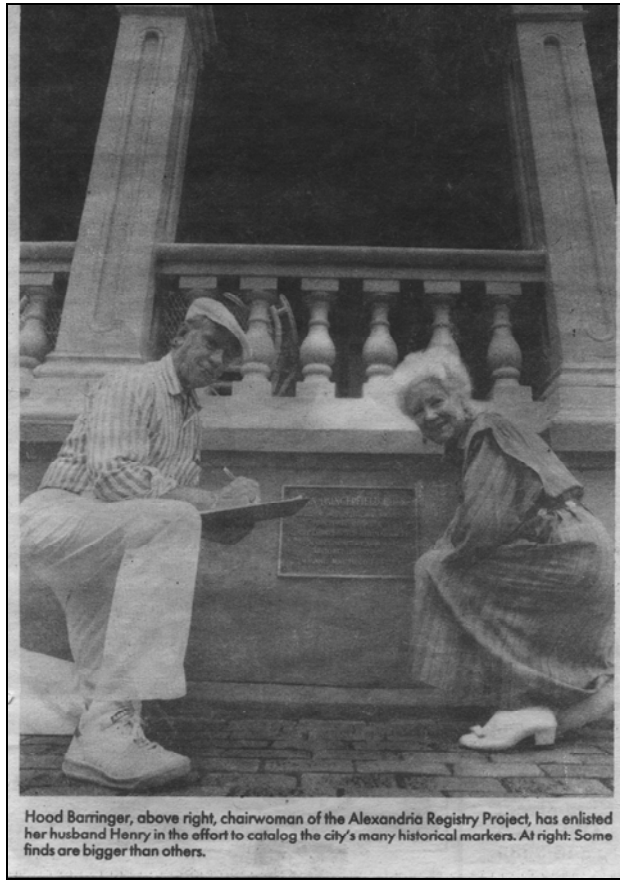
This interview has been edited by the interviewee and may not reflect the audio-recording exactly.

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Hood Barringer, above right, chairwoman of the Alexandria Registry Project, has enlisted her husband Henry in the effort to catalog the city's many historical markers. At right: Some finds are bigger than others.

Hood Barringer, above right, chairwoman of the Alexandria Registry Project, has enlisted her husband, Henry in the effort to catalog the city's many historical markers. (Newspaper clipping courtesy of Hood Barringer)

General Background	
Hood Barringer	My name is Hood Hover Barringer.
Tara Giuliano	Do I have permission to record this interview?
Hood Barringer	You do, certainly do.
T.G.	Can you tell me where and when you were born?
Hood Barringer	I was born June 17 th , 1917 in Old Sibley Hospital in Washington, D.C.
T.G.	When did you move to Alexandria?
Hood Barringer	Well, I would say that we bought this home 50 years ago, but it's a little hard for me to tell you about the years that we have actually lived in Alexandria because my husband is in the foreign services and we have moved 14 times. But now we have been here since retirement.

Neighborhood/Gerald Ford	
T.G.	Well, can you describe this neighborhood for me and what businesses were nearby about the time you moved here?
Hood Barringer	I can tell you about the neighborhood because, of course, Old Town Alexandria has always been here. When the second World War came, Alexandria began to expand. When we were in military service, many of us lived in Parkfairfax apartments. There is big history there, too, because the Eisenhower's lived there and others who became prominent in the War effort. We were acquainted with the area, so when we finally came here --a lot of us to stay-- they started building these houses. We were the second house on a farm that was right here where we are now.
T.G.	So the neighborhood kind of developed around you while you were here?
Hood Barringer	Well, it turned out that the gentlemen's who's farm it was -- who's family farm it was-- of course, he went to college and the young people began to expand and do all kinds of things, and he became a builder. And so, each one of these houses in this neighborhood are different. It's not a development. They were built one at a time, and more or less designed with Mr. Beach's help, by each individual.
T.G.	Was this house designed by you then?
Hood Barringer	This house was not designed by me because I didn't think I would ever get a house here. We first lived down in Alexandria in a town house and people were building a house and I was never going to be here long enough to build a house. But somebody designed and built this house and decided it was too big. And was that a break for us! So the real estate lady brought us up here and they then designed and built another house on another street. I came in and the owner was sitting here by the fireplace and her husband was sitting here, "It's a nice room." Then, she took me down and showed us the dining room, and I said, "I will take this house!" [Laughs] And she said, "Don't you want to see upstairs, don't you want to see the bedrooms!?" I said, "No, I mainly want the dining room, and I'm satisfied." That was 50 years ago. Then we left [Alexandria]. We didn't live here that much because we moved back and forth in the State Department.
T.G.	We understand Gerald and Betty Ford lived right down the street? And this was the address of your home at the time they lived there? Or did you move here after?
Hood Barringer	No, when Betty and Gerry moved here, we actually were living abroad. He was a Congressman at the time, but we already became friends because you heard me say, "Next Sunday we are going to Michigan." He [Ford] was our famous football player at the University of Michigan when we were all Seniors! We knew they lived here. When we came home and were here for a period

	of time -- we would have home duty, too, -- we would stay here for a couple of years, and during that time they were a part of the neighborhood.
T.G.	That's really cool! What do you recall about the neighbors, the Fords? Did they go outside a lot, play with the children? Did their children play with other children?
Hood Barringer	Oh, I can tell you all about that. For the longest, probably about 50 years, the same people were here. We would go away, and come back and the same people would be here. And they were here too most of that time. And so, unfortunately though, my children never went to school with their children because my children went to school abroad. By the time my youngest came, and did go to one year of high school here, the Ford's children had gone. But, of course, they were very much a part of the neighborhood. I mean, we all knew the children. They were wonderful children. Every morning (and this is my opinion, he was the most dedicated public servant), I heard Betty used to say he got breakfast. He got his own breakfast every day, and then he had a driver, and the driver would pull up front and he would get in the car and open the <i>Washington Post</i> . And he would read the <i>Washington Post</i> cover to cover on his way to the Capitol. So, I always thought that was neat. And then the children went to public schools. (The people across the street, the Abruzzese's -- I don't know if you've had a chance to talk to them.) Then we went away again, I'm not very good on the years, but when we came back, he had just become Vice President. In those days we didn't have a Vice Presidential residence. So they lived right here, on our street, when he was vice president. And those years we were here.
T.G.	Did the neighborhood change at all when he became Vice President?
Hood Barringer	No, because they were just Gerry and Betty. [Laughs] Of course, it was exciting, and it still is, kind of. When we thought the funeral was going to pass through here, all these people came up here on our street! But they didn't pass here, after all.
T.G.	Did you know about the security measures that were being installed in his house at the time? Was it pretty apparent?
Hood Barringer	It was. Right across the street...I don't know if they would be willing to be interviewed (they have a plaque on their house -- the Abruzzese's) -- because they became the Press Room. Because by that time, anything that would happen concerned the Vice President, and the Ford's family room became the headquarters for the Secret Service. I don't know if they [Secret Service] would stay all night, I don't remember that, but they would come in the morning and they would be here all day. And then when the press came instead of letting them in there, they would go across

	the street. Now, you are going to have to look at the plaque.
T.G.	Do you have any other thoughts or memories about the Fords or the neighborhood that you would like to share with me?
Hood Barringer	Well.... Just what I told you. Of course, they [the Fords] would come to our neighborhood parties. It was a popular neighborhood. We just recently had a street party for Memorial Day. It's changing a little now. But you have to remember [that] when the Fords lived here we were all the same people who had originally bought here. And all the children were the same age. And they [the Fords] had a swimming pool. But I wasn't really here that much with my children, but I'm sure the neighborhood kids swam in the pool. And they all knew each other in school, I'm sure. My main relationship with him was the neighborhood parties when we would get together and just visit. And we usually talked about how they wanted us to come skiing in Michigan, because they would go skiing in Michigan. But in those days we weren't here that much. We did finally end up skiing in Michigan, but not with the Fords... I always thought how it was neat how he got breakfast and getting up to work early... and the children. The lady is gone who lived up at the corner, she would look after the children a lot because Mrs. Ford was busy, too. Then the Abruzzese's -- their children were a bit older and I think one of them was a sitter. All the neighbors were sitters for everyone else.
T.G.	It sounds like a good neighborhood
Hood Barringer	I feel like somebody needs to write a history just of this neighborhood because I would call it a [19]50's neighborhood. And that's when things began to change when the Second World War came. Imagine that there were fewer apartments; people just lived in big houses. There were no suburbs like this, they lived in Old Town or they had farms and big homes in the country. There has been a lot of change.
T.G.	Did this neighborhood have a name?
Hood Barringer	Clover. Yes, this Clover.
T.G.	Do you know why it has the name Clover?
Hood Barringer	I don't know who named it Clover, but what makes this neighborhood historical in the name is what I call the [19]50's house. You know, we had certain things like a washer-dryer in one machine! You can't get one now. Just certain things say it was a [19]50's house. The kitchens look entirely different than the kitchens in the new house(s). So I say this is a period in history, its not Old Town, and we are between the Masonic Memorial and one of the oldest Episcopal Seminaries in the country. Have you been to the Seminary? See, you are going to be busy now that you have met me! You have to go up to the Seminary – it's beautiful! It was just standing there on the hill with this farm here, and then they built the houses.

T.G.	When was the Masonic Temple built?
Hood Barringer	I don't know the year, but it's George Washington Masonic Memorial. He was a Mason. And it's very interesting. They have the largest oriental rug in the world in the Masonic memorial.
Community Involvement	
T.G.	That's awesome! Tell me about your involvement with the Lyceum.
Hood Barringer	Well, first I worked for the National Trust, because I am especially interested in history. Actually I am a clinical psychologist, but I am more interested in history than anything. Moving and traveling, of course, developed my interest in history. So first I worked for the National Trust. And then I worked at Woodlawn Plantation, and it was a long drive every day. Also, I was in charge of the evening activities and I didn't like to come home. So I decided to accept a job at the Lyceum. So this is history. The Bicentennial was actually over when I came. But for the Bicentennial, the Lyceum, you know, was developed. That is how it got restored. Did you know that? Well, the Bicentennial Center was sitting there. When I went away the building was just sitting there looking like it was going to fall down. And when I came back it was restored. Because the Bicentennial Commission had paid to get it restored, and we had something called travel counselors. So I was first working at Woodlawn Plantation and wanted to get to Alexandria, and I became a travel counselor for the State. And that was headquartered in the Lyceum. Now that's history because that will never happen again. And we sent thousands of people out over the state of Virginia and, of course, all [of] the historic sites were more and more developed because of that. So that was what we did at the Lyceum.
T.G.	What did you do at Woodlawn Plantation?
Hood Barringer	At Woodlawn I was a docent. I was also a docent in Alexandria for various houses, but that was all volunteer [work]. But in those days we were all staffed and we led the tours and we managed the shop. We did a lot of special events there.
T.G.	Did you run any specific programs at the Lyceum besides the travel network?
Hood Barringer	Yes, I did a lot of the Lyceum. Well, when the Bicentennial ended, of course, we didn't get as many visitors. Being near the airport and not too hard to get from Union Station. If they wanted to visit Virginia, it was natural they would come to the Lyceum [during the Bicentennial]. Then, I guess people stopped traveling around as much, so then they embellished it into a museum. More exhibits, aside from the Bicentennial exhibits, they were spectacular. But they couldn't leave them there forever. So we began to collect artifacts and do different things. We got a new director, and she was wanting a way to attract more people. So I

	got the idea of doing “a promenade.” And it was a fashion show. And I had costumes representing Lee’s boyhood home, the Lee-Fendell house, the Carlyle house, the Arlington house, the Lyceum, all those periods. I had to have Civil War, colonial, and you know, different periods. Oh, and Fort Ward was also a part of our organizations of docents. One of the members, she really knew a lot more about costumes than I did and her name was Dudley [Slate?]. Well, Dudley, she may have even made her own costumes. But anyway, I had certain people that would do costumes and I think that Arlington House gave me costumes that I used. And so then I just told the story right through. And I never had my narrative copyrighted and someone said I should have done that. And this doesn’t need to go into the tape; can you turn it off for a moment?
T.G.	Sure...
Hood Barringer	So what I do want to tell you is that I was very busy with the promenade. And [with] the travel business I had been all over. Every town and hamlet in the state of Virginia. So I decided I wanted a part-time job, so I became manager of the gift shop. So all that money... I made a lot of money for the city. So it’s too bad now, because when I retired they didn’t hire a full-time manager and I’m sure they don’t make the money that the store made, which is too bad, but they still have the shop. But you haven’t been to the Lyceum!?! You need to check it out because they do have a shop. And I did the buying for Gadsby’s Tavern. You haven’t been to Gadsby’s Tavern! You have to go to all these places!
T.G.	I haven’t been anywhere yet.
Hood Barringer	Well, on your weekends now, you just have to...
T.G.	There is a lot I need to do in this area
Hood Barringer	Now, I bet you don’t know this, over at the airport, is the foundation of the home of Martha Washington’s son. Now, let me get this straight. It’s been awhile since I’ve been doing tours. Their daughter married Robert E. Lee... You go to it from the parking lot from the airport. Pam [Cressey] knows all about it because we worked to save that! Because they were just going to excavate the whole thing and you will want to see it because it is a big archaeological site. There’s nothing there, but the foundation.
T.G.	What inspired you to learn about the history of Alexandria?
Hood Barringer	Well, because I was always interested in history because I was born in Washington, [D.C.], I guess. And I lived in such places! Speaking of archaeology...in Greece... I was always interested in where ever I lived.
T.G.	That’s great. What was the state of the preservation or the history movement like in Alexandria when you moved here? Was there a

	lot going on? I know you spoke about the house.
Hood Barringer	Well, the Ramsey House. Well, all the historic houses. We had an organization called H.A.D. -- Historic Alexandria Docents. And I don't know, maybe it has been five years since they terminated that. I'm not exactly sure why because those were all volunteers. Also, through that network they hired people to work in all the houses too. We had all kind of special events. Like every year we celebrated Robert E. Lee's birthday and General Braddock's meeting in Carlyle house. And we are still celebrating all those events. Now, I don't know. See how interested.... We went through a real period of great interest in history...
T.G.	I have been to Mount Vernon! [Laughs]
Hood Barringer	Well, that is a little over done. [Laughs] I don't think George Washington would love Mount Vernon. But I would like your reaction to it as a young person. You really like to have all that information laid before you?
T.G.	It's very informative at Mount Vernon. But I like history.
Hood Barringer.	Yeah well, and it's a good way to get young people interested in history. But it's a lot and costs a lot of money.
T.G.	So what other history groups have you been involved in? I know you said H.A.D and Mount Vernon. Were you involved in any other groups in Alexandria?
Hood Barringer	Let's see. I never was in the Garden Club in Alexandria. And my main thing doesn't really have to do with history. But I was in the Women's Committee of the National Symphony Orchestra. I have been going to the National Symphony Orchestra since I was a child. And, of course, I was really interested in that. A young lady down the street and I have just done a personal history of the Women's Committee, which is a fundraising committee for the Symphony Orchestra.
T.G.	You are very active.
Hood Barringer	And I am going to try to get her to do a history of Clover because I would like us to have some historic status because you know now people are tearing houses down. One house was going to be torn down on this street and we stopped it. None other[s] have been torn down and we need to be sure that that doesn't happen because this is a period! The new houses don't look anything like this house. So I'm going to try to get her to work with me.
T.G.	What's her name?
Hood Barringer	Melinda [Meil]? She has been a chairman of the board of the Gadsby's Tavern. She is very interested in history and she's young. She has done a lot of different things herself.
T.G.	What was the most significant activity that you have participated in any of these groups?
Hood Barringer	I guess the promenade. I just loved that. And they [the costumes] were just so wonderful. We had the tavern servant, and the girl

	who worked in the tavern and all the characters were all so good. And they were[n't] real actors and actresses, but they were all amateurs. Well, the tavern servant was also the head of the parade. He was the Town Friar. You have a lot in store, I'm glad that you've come here, now don't go away!
T.G.	Yeah, I have a lot to do.
Hood Barringer	Well, don't go away, see, because we need you. You see, because once you get older you can't keep up doing all that. So join one of houses, besides being a part of archaeology. Join Gadsby's Tavern I'd say, or the Lee-Fendell house, now. It's not as active, but they are building up. I worked there too. When I retired I was lonely not seeing those people every day so I went to work at the Lee-Fendell House, and it's pretty interesting, too. And they have a young director and quite a few young people working there, too. I think you'd like it.
T.G.	So were you involved in the land marking of Fort Ward?
Hood Barringer	Let's see... the land marking [of Fort Ward]. I'm not sure how it went. What I did was -- my husband and I -- identified all the plaques. I think that Pam [Cressey]... [unclear] wanted us to do that. Do you know about H.A.R.C? Historic Alexandria Resources Commission? Well, I was the second president, chairmen --or whatever you call it. That was an overall history group. So we decided we would identify all the plaques and identify other sites that needed plaques. And we did that on the request of one of the City Council members. I'm sure that Pam has all that information, and has gone way beyond what we did because she is absolutely fabulous. For a young archaeologist, you are very fortunate to be working with her.
T.G.	Have you heard of the establishment in 1972 called the 'Committee of 100?'
Hood Barringer	[Pauses] I'm not sure, what do they do?
T.G.	It was created to fund Alexandria archaeology excavations.
Hood Barringer	No, I haven't heard of that. You mean like the sugar factory? And before they build, they do an archaeology study? I know about that, but I didn't have anything to do with it.
T.G.	So you were here during the establishment of the Office of Historic Alexandria? And when Gadsby's Tavern became a museum?
Hood Barringer	No, Gadsby's Tavern had become a museum long before that. I was just at an event in the Legion Hall [at the] back of Gadsby's Tavern and they were talking that day about the history. They gave the door of Gadsby's Tavern to the Metro[politan] Museum in New York and the balcony in the ballroom where the musicians used to play. Now, what was your question?
T.G.	About Office of Historic Alexandria and Gadsby's Tavern.
Hood Barringer	Yeah, that was restored. That was already restored when Jean

	Federico came. There was another director before Jean, but she [Jean] was the certainly the most active. She did the most.
T.G.	What would you say to someone today who is considering getting involved with the Office of Historic Alexandria?
Hood Barringer	I would say what I would say to you! You must get involved and you must go around and see! You just have to read up on the history. You know, even to go on one of the house tours, around Christmas time. Then you get so interested in the families. We have a lot of original families here. And it's very interesting and of course, the houses are just fabulous. Just beautiful! I would say, read about the history and join at least one of the houses. Of course, you are probably busy at Archaeology, and then you are right there in the Torpedo Factory, and that is another history. You need to talk to Marian Van Landingham. I bet someone has already interviewed her. She is an artist who started the Torpedo Factory. She got the idea to make it into art studios.
T.G.	Is there anything else you would like to tell me that I haven't asked about Alexandria, or your experiences here?
Hood Barringer	Let me see what I haven't told you. Of course, we have to think about the river! We are right here on the river and we have this organization that is building boats. They --just like archaeology-- are interested in old boats. There was a man here, Admiral Tilp[?] and one of the little sight-seeing boats down there is named after him, unless it's not running anymore. But he used to tell us all about the river. You have to have somebody else besides me tell you that. But they had boats where they had gambling on the boats and tours down to Mount Vernon. It was interesting, the life on the river. There will be somebody who will tell you about life on the river.
T.G.	That would be the next set of interviews... Life on the river. Well, I don't have too much more, so if there are any stories or anything you would like to tell me, I open the floor to you!
Hood Barringer	I think you might want to borrow my tapes sometime. But wait until, you know, you would look at them because I only have one copy, and then I think you would get a lot of information from looking at the tapes. On the other hand, that may not be exactly what you are trying to get it. I'm not sure. You know about Lloyd House? All the history of Alexandria instead of being at the regular library is at the Lloyd House. ... I knew you would be focusing on the Fords, and by focusing on the Fords, I want you to focus on the fact that this is a [19]50's neighborhood. It's different then the period before the Second World War and it's different than what they are building and developing now. And, we all know what the Fords did, what he did. And somebody sent me an e-mail -- a council member -- asking if he didn't think that up here on the corner, we're going to have a park. Did you know

	<p>about that? Well, the last vacant lot [used to be] a farm lot. The horses used to be in there when I was in college. We used to take my little nephew up and sit him on the fence and he used to watch the horses in the field and then the church bought the property and built a church – Now, that’s archaeology! Pam must have worked on that lot to see what had been [there] -- there was an old house on it. But anyway, now there’s going to be eight mansions. We aren’t very happy about it. But they also had to give the city a portion for a park. I guess they contacted different people and asked if they didn’t think they [sh?]ould put a memorial to Gerry Ford. ...You aren’t recording this are you?</p>
<p>T.G.</p>	<p>It’s recording.</p>
<p>Hood Barringer</p>	<p>Oh, you’re still recording. Good, because this is what I think. I do not think that it would be in character to put a monument to Gerald Ford up on the corner. I don’t think he would like that! What I have suggested, and of course, I have no power, but I just said, “Why don’t they see to whatever or whoever buys the house, whoever restores the house...I think it would be nice if the City would oversee that.” Do you agree? I mean, if we want to talk about the history and Gerald Ford, we should leave the house, restore it in the style that it’s in -- from the period. ... If they wanted to have a couple of benches in the park that say we are a part of Clover, or Gerald Ford [lived] in Clover...(He might have been in charge of calling it Clover. I don’t know how it got its name!) It wouldn’t be in character to memorialize him in any way. He wouldn’t have approved that. He loved his house and they loved their home and their neighbors. She had some difficulties from time to time, but she has done a wonderful service to the country establishing her center. She was a charming person....Would you drink a cup of tea!?</p>
<p>T.G.</p>	<p>Sure! Thank you for your interview. <i>[Tea was then had. During tea, Hood Barringer remembered having tea with Betty Ford in the White House, and also showed Tara Giuliano a photo from the Fords, sent to the Barringers.]</i></p>