



The Spectacle

From the Office Down the Hall

It takes eight seconds for sunlight to reach the earth. Squinting into the clear blue, winter sky this seems an unlikely fact, yet one I have never questioned. There is a trick of time here. The light I see dappled through the thin, evergreen leaves of the Deodora cedar, the warmth that soaks into the morning room on a summer day, began its journey at some uncertain time, in some poorly understood place, and is already well advanced along a path to unknown destinations. Similarly, on the morning of the last day of May this year, I found myself studying a thin, blue line that suggested the same sort of trick. It was a Saturday and I had padded through a quiet house into the bathroom with the rich potential of a weekend before me—only to find a short, plastic stick resting on the closed toilet lid. My wife Mary, whom many of you have met, had obviously been up in the night. A faint blue line bisected the left window in the stick. I stood somewhat stunned while meaning caught up with sight. Mary and I are going to have a son!

As you know, I like to maintain an “open door” office policy. This means you are welcome to stick your head in at any given moment and tell me what is on your mind; there are a lot of things you see, know and understand that I don’t. Not only do I appreciate your help as volunteers, I also get a lot out of your frank insights. However, my anticipated progeny (while “Rooney” has been suggested for a name, I think it will be awhile before we know what he will be called) is due February 9. Therefore, sometime around the end of January, and for the bulk of February, you are going to be lonely in my office if you stop by. So if you



Arlington House in winter - February 19, 2003

want to bend my ear, please grab me soon, otherwise you can talk to Frank, Malcolm or Karen who will be filling in quite well, I’m sure, while I’m gone.

Meanwhile, I find I am taking the same tack as Lee. In 1832, he wrote to Mary during her first pregnancy: “Take care of yourself. Don’t ride on horseback, or go into crowds, or hurry about the house.” Mary and I just bought a new car with air bags and specialized hooks for securing baby car seats. Just for good measure, I have also told her to stay off of horses.

Kendell Thompson
Site Manager,
Arlington House,
The Robert E. Lee Memorial

New Look for The Spectacle

This is now the fourth issue of The Spectacle utilizing the new format. This change was made for a number of reasons. The format follows the standards now established for NPS newsletters and uses the approved fonts (typeface). The fonts are smaller and we hope that this is not causing difficulty with reading the print. The smaller fonts and use of columns allows more material per page thereby reducing the number of pages per issue. This format also saves us mailing the newsletter in large envelopes, saving the cost of envelopes and reducing postage costs. You’ll have noticed that the mailing address is printed on the last page of the newsletter.

If you have comments please feel free to share them with us.

Significant Historic Events in January

January 1862

After some of the Mount Vernon relics disappeared from Arlington, Selina Gray turned over the keys to General Irvin McDowell. McDowell was chagrined that thefts had occurred despite his presence, and he endeavored to have the remaining pieces of the “Washington Treasury” removed to a safer location, the Patent Office — now the National Portrait Gallery in Washington.

January 1, 1868

From Lexington, Lee wrote to Martha (“Markie”) Custis Williams: “With the return of a new year my mind reverts to you with fresh pleasure...you are often present to my thoughts & always come to brighten reminiscences of the past...My interest in time & its concerns is daily fading away & I try to keep my eyes & thoughts fixed on those eternal shores to which I am fast hastening.”

January 2, 1862

The Adjutant General directed that the former Arlington slaves be given subsistence because their care, once the responsibility of their owner, would now need to be assumed by the government.

January 3, 1803

After the death of his grandmother, Martha Washington, in 1802, GWP Custis purchased many of the Washington’s furnishings, livestock and farm equipment at a second Mount Vernon auction. After two such auctions, Custis owed \$4,545, a debt which took him years to pay.

January 4, 1858

On January 8 of this year, the New York Times published a letter written by Lee on January 4 from Arlington House:

“My attention has been called to an article from the Boston Traveler, dated Washington, 24th December, republished in the New York Times of the 30th, under the caption of ‘The Slaves of Mr. Custis.’

“It is there charged that the emancipation of the slaves will be much retarded, if not wholly prevented, by his heirs; that all attempts to see the will of Mr. Custis have proved abortive; that is whispered about Washington that foul play is in progress in regard to the Negroes on his plantations in Virginia; that they are now being sold South; that all of them will be consigned to hopeless Slavery unless something is done; and that nothing can be done unless the will is produced, &c.

“...[Mr. Custis’] will was submitted to the Alexandria County Court for probate on the first day of its session (7th December) after the arrival of the executor at Arlington, and is there on record in his own handwriting, open to inspection...

“What Mr. Custis is said to have stated to the Washington correspondent of the Boston Traveler, or to his assembled slaves, on his death bed, is not known to any member of his family. But it is well known that during the brief days of his last illness, he was constantly attended by his daughter, grand-daughter and niece, and faithfully visited by his physician and pastor. So rapid was the progress of his disease, after its symptoms became alarming, that there was no assembly of his servants, and he took leave of but one, who was present when he bade farewell to his family. R.E. Lee, Executor.”

(So far as is known, this is the only instance in which Lee publicly responded to an attack by an abolitionist.)

January 6, 1759

Martha Dandridge Custis, widow of Daniel Parke Custis, married George Washington on the Twelfth Day of Christmas. GWP Custis claimed that his grandmother’s wedding took place at St. Paul’s Church in New Kent

County, while his mother, Eleanor Calvert Custis, believed they were married at the White House, the Custis farm on the Pamunkey River.

January 8, 1863

Writing from camp at Fredericksburg, General Lee informed Mrs. Lee that he had fulfilled one of the stipulations of her father’s will: “I executed the deed of manumission sent to me by Mr. Caskie & returned it to him...”

January 9, 1826

Speaking at the annual meeting of the American Colonization Society in Washington, GWP Custis described slavery as “the mightiest serpent that ever infested the world.” He asserted that 200 years of slavery in the South had not accomplished as much as one generation of free men in the West.

January 9, 1857

From Texas, Lee wrote to his daughter, Mildred, about her music lessons: “I hope you will like Mr. Palmer better...but you will like neither the teacher nor subject unless you practice diligently & learn to play well. That is the secret. We are always fond of what we do well. Try it & you will find it so.”

January 14, 1846

Mrs. Lee and the children returned to Arlington to celebrate a belated Christmas with her parents. On the 14th, Lee wrote to his wife from Fort Hamilton, NY: “I am very solitary & my only companion is my dog & cats. But Speck has become so jealous now that he will hardly let me look at the cats. He seems to be afraid that I am going off from him & never lets me stir without him.”

January 19, 1807

Robert E. Lee, the fourth child of Henry Lee and his second wife, Ann Carter Lee, was born at Stratford Hall, Westmoreland County, Virginia. Robert Edward Lee was named for two of his mother’s brothers, Robert and Edward Carter.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

This month, we are featuring a great 19th Century dessert. Be sure to try it out and tell us what you think. As always, feel free to contribute any tantalizing dishes of your own, your support is always welcome. Enjoy!!

Plum Pudding

“Take a pound of the best flour, sift it and make it up before sunrise, with six eggs beaten light, a large spoonful of good yeast, and as much milk as will make it the consistence of bread. Let it rise well. Knead into it half a pound of butter. Put in a grated nutmeg, with one and a half pounds of raisins stoned and cut up. Mix all well together. Wet a cloth, flour it, and tie it loosely, that the pudding may have room to rise. Raisins for puddings or cakes should be rubbed in a little flour, to prevent their settling to the bottom. See that it does not stick to them in “lumps.”

From The Virginia Housewife 1828

1 cup flour
1/2 teaspoon each salt, baking soda, nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves, and allspice
1 cup soft bread crumbs
1 cup chopped suet
1 cup prune pulp
1/2 cup brown sugar
1 cup uncooked chopped prunes
1/4 cup candied lemon peel, finely chopped
1/4 cup molasses
3 eggs, separated

AN IMPORTANT REMINDER

Please contact Delphine Gross no later than the 20th of each month with availability dates and times to be posted the following month (Please call by January 20th with February information). Even if you are a regularly scheduled VIP please contact Delphine to confirm your availability. Again, the contact number is (703) 235-1530 ext. 227. Please leave the dates and times you are available on the voice mail. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Arlington House was the home of Robert E. Lee and his family for thirty years and is uniquely associated with the Washington and Custis families. It is now preserved as a memorial to General Lee, who gained the respect of Americans in both the North and the South.

Arlington House
The Robert E. Lee Memorial
c/o George Washington Memorial Parkway
Turkey Run Park
McLean, VA 22101

Phone
703-235-1530

Web Site
<http://www.nps.gov/arho>

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Significant Historic Events in January (continued)

January 23, 1828

Mrs. Mary Randolph died in Washington, DC, at the age of 65. She was the wife of David Meade Randolph, a descendent of one of the oldest families in Virginia, a descendant of Pocahontas, and a cousin to Mary Fitzhugh Custis, Thomas Jefferson and Robert E. Lee. Tradition identifies her also as the godmother of Mrs. Robert E. Lee. Mrs. Randolph's 1824 first edition of "The Virginia Housewife" was considered the most influential American cookbook of the 19th Century. Her grave, located just below Arlington House on Custis Walk, is the oldest known grave in Arlington Cemetery.

January 29, 1756

Henry ("Lighthorse Harry") Lee, father of R.E. Lee, was born at "Leesylvania," near Dumfries in Prince William County, Virginia. He was the son of Henry Lee and Lucy Grymes and one of 8 children, the 2nd child & first son. A graduate of Princeton University, he attained the rank of Major General during the American Revolution and later served as Governor of Virginia and Congressman from Virginia.

Area Special Events

January 10

Emancipation Proclamation Day commemoration at The Newsome House Museum and Cultural Center in Newport News. Noon-2 pm. 757-247-2360 or www.newsomehouse.org

January 10

Civil War video series, film vignettes on topics from the Confederate perspective at Fort Ward Museum in Alexandria. 2 pm. Free. Reservations suggested. 703-838-4848.

January 17

Civil War video series at Fort Ward. See January 10 listing.

January 17-18

Living history, "School of the Soldier," see a Federal unit prepare for war at Endview Plantation in Newport News. Free with admission. 757-887-1862 or www.endview.org

January 24

Civil War video series at Fort Ward. See January 10 listing.

January 24

Civil War video series at Fort Ward. See January 10 listing.



New Look for NPS Websites

The National Park Service has adopted a new look for the websites of each national park unit. The new format closely resembles the look of park brochures with the black band at the top and the NPS arrowhead. The information contained for each site remains the same but is arranged differently. Parks have the option of using more than one photograph on the home page and these are displayed at random. The other web pages

use smaller pictures and can have a different picture for each page or can use the same picture on all pages.

Below is an example of the new look of the web page for Arlington House, which can be found at www.nps.gov/arho. Have a look for yourself and the other parks. You can select other parks from the drop down list at www.nps.gov/parks.html

National Park Service

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial

Virginia
Part of:
George Washington Memorial Parkway



Fee Information
[View all Fees >>](#)

The house that Robert E. Lee called home for 30 years and one uniquely associated with the Washington and Custis families is preserved today as a memorial to General Lee, who gained the respect of Americans in both the North and South. Restoration of Lee Mansion authorized March 4, 1925; transferred from War Department August 10, 1933; made a permanent memorial with name change to "Custis-Lee Mansion" June 29, 1955; restoration of historic name June 30, 1972.

Arlington House is open all year from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The Robert E. Lee Museum at Arlington House is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Arlington House grounds are open from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. between April 1 and September 30, and from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. between October 1 and March 31.

Arlington House, Grounds and Museum are closed December 25th and January 1st.

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Contact Information

Write to George Washington Memorial Parkway Turkey Run Park McLean, VA 22101	Phone Visitor Information 703-235-1530	Email GWMP_Superintendent@nps.gov
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ParkNet U.S. Department of the Interior FOIA Privacy Disclaimer FirstGov

January 2004

Arlington House VIP Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Happy New Year Arlington House closed	2 Joan Cashell 9:30-12:30	3
4 Jim Pearson 12:00-4:30	5 Walter DeGroot 9:30-12:00 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00	6 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00	7 Jack McKay 9:30-12:30	8 C. Needham and Elaine Street 10:30-2:00	9 Joan Cashell 9:30-12:30	10
11 Kirsten Wolfe 9:30-4:30 Jim Pearson 12:00-4:30	12 Jo Schoolfield 10:00-2:00 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00	13 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00	14 Jack McKay 9:30-12:30 Anne Cake 12:00-3:00	15 C. Needham and Elaine Street 10:30-2:00	16 Joan Cashell 9:30-12:30	17 Nona Wartella 1:00-4:00
18 Nona Wartella 10:30-2:30 Jim Pearson 12:00-4:30 Elene Paul 10:00-3:00	19 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00	20 Elene Paul 12:30-4:30 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00	21 Jack McKay 9:30-12:30 Anne Cake 12:00-3:00	22 C. Needham and Elaine Street 10:30-2:00	23 Joan Cashell 9:30-12:30	24
25 Elene Paul 10:00-3:00 Jim Pearson 12:00-4:30	26 Jo Schoolfield 10:00-2:00 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00	27 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00	28 Jack McKay 9:30-12:30 Anne Cake 12:00-3:00	29 C. Needham and Elaine Street 10:30-2:00	30 Joan Cashell 9:30-12:30	31 Vanna Lewis 10:00-4:30

If you are available to volunteer, but are not on the calendar please call Delphine so you can be added to the schedule.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Arlington House
The Robert E. Lee Memorial
c/o George Washington Memorial Parkway
Turkey Run Park
McLean, VA 22101

<<Name>>
<<Address>>
<<CityStateZip>>

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

The Spectacle is a monthly newsletter for the volunteers of Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial.

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Comments? Write to:

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Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial
c/o George Washington Memorial Parkway
Turkey Run Park
McLean, VA 22101

Volunteers Needed

The roster of active volunteers is in dire need of additional names!!! If you know anyone interested in joining our ranks please refer them to Delphine Gross, Volunteer Coordinator (703) 235-1530 ext. 227.

