October 2019

It Happened in Arlington
The Aqueduct Bridge
by Tom Sipusic

Before the Key Bridge, there was the Aqueduct Bridge. The C&O Canal was under construction, and Alexandria merchants grew concerned that Georgetown would derive almost all the commercial benefits from it because there was no easy way to get boats to Alexandria from the canal’s Georgetown terminus. They came up with the idea of building a canal from Alexandria to what is today Rosslyn and connecting it to the C&O canal with a bridge bearing a water-filled channel and a towpath.

In 1843 the Aqueduct Bridge opened, and C&O canal boats could then reach Alexandria. One problem, though, was that the final $1,250,000 price tag far exceeded the original cost estimate of $300,000 to build the canal and bridge, and Congress had only appropriated $400,000. The remaining cost was borne by Alexandria businessmen. One reason for what is now Arlington County and Alexandria leaving the District of Columbia and rejoining Virginia in 1846 was the prospect that the Commonwealth would then buy canal bonds.

During the Civil War, the Aqueduct Bridge water channel was drained and covered with a roadway for the passage of Union army troops and wagons. Following the war, the channel was reopened and a second level, a tolled roadway for carriages and pedestrians, was built above. But the Alexandria Canal could not compete with the railroads. In 1886 the bridge was sold to the District of Columbia, and the canal closed. The superstructure was torn down, and a roadway for carriages and a towpath.

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Keeping your brain active is essential to overall health and well-being. There are many opportunities to stay engaged and mentally stimulated at Lee.

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We also offer Trivial Pursuit on the second and fourth Monday of every month, from 11am-1pm. Scrabble alternates with Trivial Pursuit on the first, third and fifth Monday, from 11am-1pm. The group is small but dedicated and would love to have you join them.

A Note from Sheila:

You’ve probably noticed that you’ve been seeing more of me these past few weeks, and not just on Tuesdays and Thursdays. That is because I will be filling in temporarily for Adriana while future staffing decisions are being made.

Please join me in welcoming our amazing intern, Chantal Ochoa, who will be with us at Lee through early December. Chantal is a graduate student in the Museum Education master’s program at George Washington University and is a certified naturalist. She will be leading a three-session program including lively discussions and activities before and after a tour of the U.S. Botanic Garden. Tentative dates are: Pre-visit at Lee – Thurs., Nov. 7; Museum Visit – Thurs., Nov. 14; and Post-visit at Lee – Fri., Nov. 15. Transportation will be provided. Space is limited. Advance registration is required. More details to follow.

Many thanks to our guest contributor, Tom Sipusic, for his superb article on the Aqueduct Bridge. If you are interested in local Arlington history and enjoy writing, we would love to hear from you! We’re looking for volunteer writers to take turns writing stories for our “It Happened in Arlington” column which appears on the back page of every issue of this monthly newsletter. Thanks in advance for your consideration!

Thanks also go to our fabulous Friday front desk volunteer, Myrna Manolis, for her help in preparing the October calendar. It’s wonderful having you back, Myrna!

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE LEE SENIOR CENTER IS OPEN ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 14, COLUMBUS DAY.

“Outside of a dog, a book is man’s best friend. Inside of a dog, it’s too dark to read.”

— Groucho Marx, The Essential Groucho: Writings by, for and about Groucho Marx
Meet Our Intern: Chantal Ochoa!
Hello! My name is Chantal Ochoa. I was born and raised in Torrance, California (just south of Los Angeles). I have a Bachelor of Arts in History with a focus in education and a minor in geography from California State University, Dominguez Hills. I am a certified California Naturalist from the University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources and a Certified Interpretive Guide from the National Association for Interpretation. I have worked in museums for the past six years. My first position was as an educational coordinator for the Dominguez Rancho Adobe Museum, the first Spanish land grant in the state of California. After four years with the Dominguez Rancho, I left my position to become an education specialist for the USS Iowa Battleship. Then I left the museum world for a year and worked as a paraeducator with the Torrance Unified School District. As a paraeducator, I worked with preschoolers on the autism spectrum. The position as a paraeducator had challenging moments, but overall it was very educational and rewarding. My most recent position in a museum was as a gallery interpreter for the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, which I had to leave to pursue my goal of attending graduate school. I am now a student at George Washington University where I am working on my master’s degree in education. Class of 2020. For my fall semester, I am doing an internship with the Lee Senior Center where I will be working on facilitating a program in t...