

Clifton Clatter



Summer 2021

A publication of the Clifton Betterment Association

www.cliftonva.org

Vol. 59, Issue 4

President's Corner



Are you ready for a 5k in September? I certainly am! Do not look for me running as that will never happen. I don't even walk it. I do get the honor of watching the start, seeing all those kids who have so much enthusiasm, telling them to keep their toes behind the line. The kids that run the one mile and the 5k are such fun to see and they are exhausted and overjoyed at the finish. They gather around the medal table.... Waiting for results. Will they keep running races as they grow into adults? I think many will and I hope that the ribbons we hand out at the end of the one mile continue to be a cherished prize for years to come. Being a volunteer brings me joy... want to help? Email me at michellestein@cox.net and we can find something to bring you the same joy!

Michelle Stein is the President of the Clifton Betterment Association (CBA)

DATES FOR YOUR CALENDAR!

September 11	Clifton Caboose Twilight Run
October 10	Clifton Day
October 16	Clifton Barn Dance
October 23	Haunted Trail
October 31	Halloween





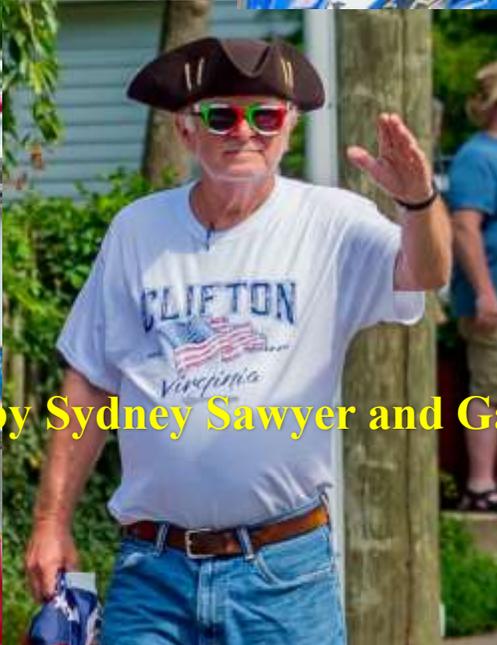
BACK TO SCHOOL BACKPACK DRIVE

A backpack collection drive sponsored by Firefighter and Friends to the Rescue Org. and Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department is being held through August 9, 2021. If you would like to contribute new backpacks, please visit the Clifton Post Office at 12644 Chapel Road, Clifton, VA or Donna Netschert, 12714 Chestnut Street, Clifton, VA (Box On Side Porch) to drop them off.

If you wish to make a monetary donation to help purchase new backpacks, please call Deputy Chief Will Bailey at 571-641-0036 or Donna Netschert at 703-887-7147 for more information.



Clifton 4th!!



Photos by Sydney Sawyer and Gary Aspesi



Historic Clifton

African American History Inventory – Fairfax County History Commission, 2021 **Author, Lynne Garvey-Hodge, Vice Chairman, Fairfax County History Commission**

As Fairfax County and especially Clifton takes a closer look at its African American heritage, it is clear the stories of African Americans in Fairfax County are an integral part of our history. In this article we will name a few African American communities that have laid the foundation for Fairfax County as we know it today. Some communities still exist, some are but a memory and some were erased under duress during the Jim Crow Era and the open racism of the 1960's.

The current research being conducted began in October 2020. The Fairfax County History Commission then approved a major initiative to take shape in 2021. Currently underway is the development of a research inventory data base organized by magisterial district in which the identification of publications, documents, records and miscellaneous materials are provide access into the histories of African American communities throughout historical Fairfax County. This committee is being led by Commissioners Phyllis Walker-Ford and Mary Lipsey. Commissioners from each district are researching and documenting African American history to the best of their abilities. When the initial effort is completed (and will likely be an ongoing project), the research inventory will be posted on the History Commission's website. Residents are being encouraged to contact their [district's Commissioners](#) with information of any site or resource that might be included in this voluminous body of research. The Inventory will include:

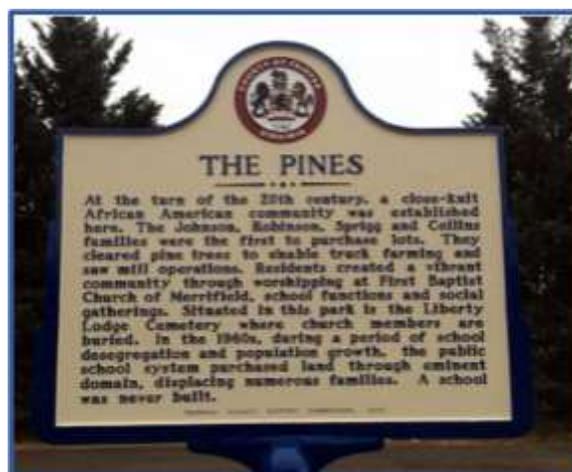
- Physical sites - buildings, archaeological sites, cemeteries, street names, communities
- Collections - printed materials such as books, brochures, correspondences, photographs, maps, etc.
- Digital resources – websites, youtube videos, story maps, etc.
- Oral histories
- Church and School histories
- Historical Roadside Markers
- Family/private records
- Objects/artifacts

One community that has as its African American history is Clifton, Virginia. Founded by a slave-owning man named William Beckwith, he took as his common-law, enslaved wife, Harriet Beckwith. While they had children together, they were all considered enslaved people along with a family named Harris and their children. There were 16 enslaved people in total and their manumission occurred with Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in January, 1863. Ironically this was the same month William Beckwith died. William had stated in his will that the slaves were all to be freed upon his death and bequeathed 200 acres to them. Some of Beckwith's descendants then stayed in the area on their inherited 200 acres south of the Orange and Alexandria railroad line. Some moved away, but the land in the area we now know as the Town of Clifton had originally been worked as the Beckwith plantation and eventually owned by his descendants. In February, 1868, northerner Harrison G. Otis purchased 1,001 acres north of the Orange & Alexandria railroad and specifically stipulated that the land behind his Clifton Hotel (now Trummers on Main) was to be built on and remain into perpetuity the Clifton Presbyterian Church. Over time, many of Beckwith's descendants moved away and yet some remained. Eventually Clifton became the town as we know it today – having changed little since its incorporation in 1902. Another fascinating Fairfax County African-American town that was lost to time was "Ilda", located in current Annandale & situated in a large area across from today's current Jewish Community Center. Today, it would be the intersection of Rt.236 & Guinea Rd. During the 2004 road widening of Guinea Rd., over 30 buried bodies of African American adults and children were uncovered, bringing to light the once vibrant and economically robust community of "Ilda". Research revealed it was the "Gibson/Parker" family cemetery associated with the "town" of Ilda. In the weekly early 20th century *Fairfax Herald*, "Ilda" had its own community highlights column – similar to the Clifton column in the same journal.

Historic Clifton

The land once was part of William Fitzhugh's tobacco plantation and it was the largest single parcel of land in Northern Virginia. The Fitzhugh descendants named it Ravensworth. The cemetery itself became a slave and tenant cemetery from the Civil War era. The area around the cemetery became a place of refuge for enslaved people moving north and Ilda became a thriving community of free blacks. It had its own blacksmith shop, school, stores, churches and meeting house – as reflected in the “Herald” articles. Horace Gibson and Moses Parker ran the blacksmith shop and it remained in business until 1910. The remains of the unearthened bodies were examined by archaeologists and then re-interred at Pleasant Valley Park cemetery, about a mile east of the original cemetery.

The site is marked with one of the beautiful Fairfax County History Commission markers, which reads:
“ ‘Ilda’, a community located at the intersection of Guinea Road and Little River Turnpike, came into existence after the Civil War and lasted into the first half of the twentieth century. It originated when two freedmen, Horace Gibson and Moses Parker, purchased property from the Gooding family on the north side of the turnpike and established a blacksmith shop. In time, a racially mixed community grew to include a post office. According to tradition, the name ‘Ilda’ was a contraction of the name Matilda Gibson Parker. Descendants of Gibson and Parker were probably buried in a nearby cemetery, perhaps originally created to accommodate Gooding family slaves. The remains were relocated in 2008.” The Fairfax County History Commission marker was dedicated on a very cold Sunday in January, 2009.



Yet another lost-to-time African American community was that of “The Pines”. It was located near present day Fairfax Hospital. Again, it was a vibrant, welcoming home to freed African American families for many years. Over 60 buildings including homes, churches, schools and park areas were taken by the right of eminent domain on the part of the Fairfax County Public School System in the early 1960's. Claiming plans to build a new high school, hundreds of African Americans were forced out of their homes within 60 days and their once “homeland” was razed. A school was never built!

Today the land includes soccer fields and open garden space for local residents. Fairfax County historian Marion Ransell Dobbins Cohen is a descendant of these families and was present at the 2016 marker dedication which honored her people and also reminded current citizens of the REAL travesties of racism. She had petitioned the Fairfax County History Commission to at place a marker on the land in 2005. The actual dedication of same was in October of 2016. The marker reads,

“ ‘The Pines’ At the turn of the 20th century, a close-knit African American community was established here. The Johnson, Robinson, Sprigg and Collins families were the first to purchase lots. They cleared pine trees to enable truck farming and saw mill operations. Residents created a vibrant community through worshipping at First Baptist Church of Merrifield, school functions and social gatherings. Situated in this park is the Liberty Lodge Cemetery where church members are buried. In the 1960s, during a period of school desegregation and population growth, the public school system purchased land through eminent domain, displacing numerous families. A school was never built.”

Historic Clifton

And yet, a still thriving but long-time present African American community called Gum Springs, remains home to many African American families. Located along Rt.1 and Fordson Road, Gum Springs is the oldest African American Community in Fairfax County, formally established as early as 1833. West Ford, a former slave, founded the community after being freed by George Washington. Located close to the Mount Vernon Estate, the community was a sanctuary for freedmen and runaways. Samuel Taylor, a run-away slave established the first institution in Gum Springs, The Bethlehem Baptist church. Assisted by Quakers, the first school was established at Bethlehem. The *Gum Springs Historical Society And Museum* was established to preserve and disseminate the history of the Gum Springs Community. Many activities, including exhibits and lectures at the Gum Springs Museum celebrate the triumph of this historic black community. Today, Gum Springs has more than 2,500 residents, up to 500 descended from the original families.

Gum Springs started on a 233-acre farm in 1833 by West Ford. A freedman's school opened on the site in 1867. (Desegregation of Virginia schools was still ongoing in the 1970s.) The Woodlawn United Methodist church and school was started in Gum Springs in 1866, and many of the names of the early families can be seen around the Hybla Valley-Gum Springs area as street names that criss-cross the land. This includes Quander Road, after the Quander family, and nearly about 500 are descendants of West Ford. Of the over 2,000 historical markers along the Virginia roadsides, there are, unfortunately, only a small portion dedicated to African Americans.

On April 29, 2021, a Commonwealth of Virginia State marker was unveiled to honor the community. The marker replaced an earlier, damaged marker. It reads, "*Gum Springs, an African-American community, originated here on a 214-acre farm bought in 1833 by West Ford (ca. 1785-1863), a freed man, skilled carpenter, and manager of the Mount Vernon estate. The freedman's school begun here in 1867 at Bethlehem Baptist Church encouraged black settlement. In 1890 the Rev. Samuel K. Taylor, William Belfield, Lovelace Brown, Hamilton Gray, Robert D. King, Henry Randall, and Nathan Webb formed the Joint Stock Company of Gum Springs and sold lots. Gum Springs has remained a vigorous black community.*" While there were many, many other displaced African American communities in Fairfax County, their stories are seldom told. The community of Willard was similarly displaced to create Dulles International Airport as was a thriving African American community that stood where today's mammoth Pentagon structure and parking lots sit. Laurel Grove in present day Alexandria was an affluent pre-Civil War freed African American community located off of what is now Franconia Road. It is still home to the Laurel Grove One-room School House and Museum. Fairfax County History Commissioner Phyllis Walker-Ford is a descendant of the affluent families who lived there, including those that donated their land for a church and the school.

While these stories may conjure up feelings of shock, disappointment and sadness, what is most important to remember is their history. The gift of our racially troubled past few years has shone a light on our past. While not always kind actions on the part of Americans, it is important to remember, so that it is not repeated. As you ready yourself for the 4th of July this year consider using this link to read a speech given by Frederick Douglass, on July 5, 1852 <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/what-to-the-slave-is-the-fourth-of-july/>.

Let us keep America - Our Land, the land of the FREE and the home of the BRAVE!

Dedication on April 29, 2021.
President of the Gum Springs Museum, Ron Chase is pictured on the right of the marker.





The Democratic Women of Clifton and Northern Virginia (DWCNV) welcomes all Democratic women from Northern Virginia to join our organization. We strive to build political awareness among members of our community, influence public policy, promote participation in political processes, and encourage connections between regional leaders and the local community. We do this through our educational meetings, newsletters, and our social events.

Now that we are getting back to in-person events and have selected our Democratic nominees, the DWCNV is looking forward to fun events, meetings, and campaigning for our Democratic candidates in the fall. We have continued to inform our members of campaign and political action opportunities through biweekly emails.

Monthly meetings have continued during the spring without interruption through now-familiar virtual formats. In September and October, we will return to hosting in-person meetings, and in November we will host our Annual Pot Luck Dinner at a member's home, the annual culmination of our Annual Holiday Projects collections for two local charities. We'll be at our Democratic booth on Clifton Day, working for our candidates and providing absentee and other voting information. Our members and potential members also plan on resuming our popular dinners at a local restaurant soon. The Book Club takes the summer off but will also resume in person in September to select books for the year ahead.

Our Adopt-a-Highway program had a cleanup in early June and collected many bags full of trash (and auto parts) along Clifton Road from the triangle to Braddock Road. We will have another cleanup in October and invite any members of the community to participate. This is a great way for students or adults to complete community service hours and also perform an important service to the community.

For more information about our organization and activities, contact us at cliftonwomendems@aol.com. You can also check out our website at <http://www.democraticwomenofclifton.org/> and our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/DWCNV>.



DWCNV Co-Chair Jane Barker and Delegate Dan Helmer (D-40) speak to a voter and DWCNV member at the Democratic Primary at Clifton Presbyterian Church polling location.



Harold Pyon, candidate for VA House of Delegates (Dist. 40), poses with “Ella” during a recent meeting of the Republican Women of Clifton. Photo courtesy of Eric Paige.

Republican candidates are in place for the November 2 election, and the Republican Women of Clifton (RWC) and surrounding areas are organizing for a big win! Making up the statewide ticket are Glenn Youngkin (Governor), Winsome Sears (Lt. Governor) and Jason Miyares (Attorney General). All representatives to the Virginia House of Delegates are up for re-election, and we have a full slate. Local Clifton resident, Harold Pyon, will be on the ballot for House District 40.

RWC is supporting the campaigns through donations and volunteer work. Issues high on our list are combating Critical Race Theory in the schools, working with law enforcement to promote public safety, and promoting election integrity. We are committed in our efforts and encourage all members of the community to join us.

We have so enjoyed monthly membership meetings . . . in person! Our most recent speakers have been Rich Anderson from the Republican Party of Virginia and Springfield Supervisor Pat Herrity. We had a delightful fundraiser where members left with all varieties and sizes of elephant figurines from around the world.

Members volunteer under red tents throughout the county, staffing farmers markets, rallies, early voting polling places, election day . . . and most fun of all, “Clifton Day!” We hand out literature, go door-knocking, answer questions, and, in these difficult days, sometimes feel like we are therapists. We are available to the candidates and to the voters in whatever way we can help.

If you agree with what we are working for . . . even in part . . . we invite you to contact us to see where you might fit in or to learn more about us. As many of us grass roots volunteers have learned personally, it just takes getting off the couch and taking that first step. We are all in this together and learn from each other. We look forward to meeting you! Our website is www.CliftonGOP.com

Around Clifton

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www.cliftonhorsesociety.org

Around Clifton



The Historic Town of Clifton's Little Free Library, located in front of the Community Center right off of Main Street, is a Covid-19 friendly way of encouraging literacy among all ages. After building the library in 2017, local Girl Scout Troop 2009 has maintained the flow and circulation of books to include everything from children's Gold Books, to dictionaries, murder mystery novels and 'how to' books. The Little Free Library is open to all ages: take a book or two, return them later, or replace the ones you took with a few books of your choice to keep the circulation alive and of interest to all!

Adelaide Machado Ulm
Class of 2021

Ideas for articles, etc. for the Clatter? Please contact cliftonclatter@gmail.com



Around Clifton

MOVING IN? MOVING OUT? MOVING UP?

Welcome
Town
of
Clifton
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Contact Ann O'Dea

Cliftonclatter@gmail.com

Around Clifton



Fairfax Station Railroad Museum is excited to announce the official launch of our new website this month. Volunteer members of the Museum worked long hours over a period of 7 months with local business, Intelligent Solutions of Springfield, VA. That partnership has resulted in a new website that brings the Station, " on a level with other organizations our size in being able to reach our local and worldwide communities of interest in railroading history and the US Civil War period." said Jack Migliaccio, President. Visit the website, www.fairfax-station.org. The Museum is located at 11200 Fairfax Station Road in Fairfax Station, VA. 703-425-9225. www.Facebook.com/FFXSRR.

NEW PASTOR
The Congregation of
SECOND BAPTIST CHURCH CLIFTON
IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE ELECTION OF OUR NEW PASTOR
PASTOR TONY RAY SMITH
We give praise to God for the work that has already begun and welcome Pastor Smith, Lady Smith and their family to Second Baptist Church Clifton
The Official Celebration of Installation is Forthcoming!
The Officers and Members of Second Baptist Church Clifton

A purple and blue announcement poster for a new pastor. On the left is a portrait of Pastor Tony Ray Smith, a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a dark blue suit, a yellow shirt, and a blue and white plaid tie. The background is a gradient of purple and blue. The text is in white and yellow. In the top left corner, there is a circular logo with a white outline and a small building icon inside.

Around Clifton

Northern Virginia Therapeutic Riding Program (NVTRP) is thrilled to announce that the organization is moving forward in August with building the long-awaited Jean and Ric Edelman Indoor Riding Arena on its 17-acre farm, at the corner of Popes Head and Clifton Roads.

The facility will include a 17,000 square foot indoor riding arena, classroom, rider observation area, and restrooms. It will be built on the footprint cleared during the first phase of building in 2018/19, which included the construction of the Trefry Outdoor Riding Arena, Kristen P. Cabbage Memorial Playground, parking, and a reconfigured entryway.

This round of construction will also include the completion of the sitework--an additional row of parking, completing the bioretention basins that are part of the stormwater management system, and the final landscaping.

TRINITY Group Construction is the general contractor for the project. They will subcontract with Lonnie Suter of Quality Buildings to build the arena itself. Lonnie is known and respected widely for building high quality, affordably priced equestrian facilities. TRINITY Group will be on-site starting in early August, planning to mobilize fully the week of August 17th.

NVTRP is a 40 year-old non-profit organization that helps children and adults with disabilities, youth-at-risk, and recovering military service personnel reach their fullest potential by riding and working with horses. This new space will allow clients to ride year-round, regardless of the weather, and also allow for an expansion of services, hopefully eliminating the typical 1+ year waiting list.

If you have questions or concerns about the project, please contact Executive Director Kelsey Gallagher at kgallagher@nvtrp.org or (703) 764-0269.

Membership Corner

The CBA board is in the process of updating membership lists and creating a usable database to track membership. I'm happy to say that we now have a completely updated, fully functional database!

The majority of memberships in the CBA have lapsed, so I have now begun the process of reaching out to past members via email. I'm getting quite a few email bounce backs, so I may be following up by phone as well.

There will be a new online registration and renewal site launching soon or you can send the form from the Clatter with payment.

If you are wondering if your membership has lapsed, or if you have questions about membership, please don't hesitate to email me at CBA.VA.Membership@gmail.com. I'm happy to answer any questions you have.

For current members, who are expiring, you will be receiving an email from me one month before your renewal is due.

We are also trying to reach out to potential members, so please mention the CBA to your new neighbors!

Jennifer M. Lowe Davis

Membership Chair

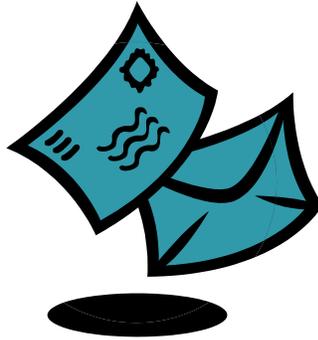
CBA.VA.Membership@gmail.com (703) 307-3747

A friendly reminder to please clean up after your furry friend.



Attention All Post Office Box Holders in Clifton

When telling people your mailing address, please list the street info under your name with the post office box below the street. It is also fine to just use the P.O. Box number. Thanks!



Green Space in Clifton

All events taking place on any green space in Clifton need to be registered on the Town calendar (which is kept by Donna Netschert) to avoid event collision regardless of whether or not it is a private, Town or CBA sponsored event. Green space includes Playground Park, Ayre Square and the 8 Acre Park. Groups larger than 10 need to make a reservation and may be subject to rental fees.

To rent or reserve any green space, please call Donna Netschert at 703-830-2727 or email villagetimesaver@aol.com.





CLIFTON BETTERMENT ASSOCIATION

Clifton Betterment Association
Clifton, VA 20124
www.cliftonva.org

CBA Membership Form

Date _____

Name (first & last names) _____

Partner or Spouse Name _____

Children's Names (or Others At Home) _____

Street Address: _____

P. O. Box _____

Town, State, Zip _____

Telephone 1 _____ Telephone 2 _____

E-Mail 1 _____

in directory: include do not include

in email announcements list : include do not include

in newsletter distribution list : include do not include

E-Mail 2 _____

in directory: include do not include

in email announcements list : include do not include

in newsletter distribution list : include do not include

Please check type of membership:

Family Membership

2 yr. Family Membership - \$45

1 yr. Family Membership - \$25

Individual Membership

2 yr. Individual Membership - \$25

1 yr. Individual Membership - \$15

Senior Membership - Free

QUESTIONS? Contact Jennifer Lowe-Davis, Membership Chair, CBA.VA.Membership@gmail.com

Mail form and check, made out to CBA, to: Jennifer Lowe-Davis, CBA, P. O. Box 94, Clifton, VA 20124

Members must live within the CBA boundaries (Clifton Elementary)

Information about the Clifton Clatter and the Clifton Betterment Association (CBA)

Clifton Betterment Association Officers

President - *Michelle Stein*

1st Vice President - *Jan Schneiderman*

2nd Vice President - *Steve Bittner*

Secretary - *Chris Spina*

Treasurer - *Mike Davis*

Clifton Clatter Volunteer Production Team

Volunteer Editors: **Ann O'Dea**

Email: cliftonclatter@gmail.com

Questions, concerns, or news to share? Contact the Clifton Clatter at cliftonclatter@gmail.com. The Clifton Clatter is published four times per year and is the official newsletter of the Clifton Betterment Association (CBA). Its contents are for information only. Articles express the opinion of the authors, not the CBA. The CBA Officers, the Clatter Publisher, and the contributors assume no responsibility for errors, omissions, or consequences resulting from information provided in this edition. The CBA does not officially endorse any of the products or services advertised herein.

The Clifton community affirms a desire to interact with one another in an environment of respect and integrity.

We are a community that:

- is committed to the dignity and value of one another.
- assumes the best in each other.
- communicates clearly and directly.
- provides open forums to address difficult issues in an orderly, respectful manner.
- behaves towards one another, both individually and collectively, with honesty, decency and responsibility.
- holds the preservation of our unique historic character in the highest regard.
- participates in community activities, organizations and events in the best interest of all.

*Have a new
neighbor?*

Be sure and share
your copy of the
Clifton Clatter
with them so they
can learn about
joining the CBA.

Something you would
like to see in the Clatter?
Please email us at
cliftonclatter@gmail.com
We will do our best to
include it in a future
edition.

Clifton Betterment Association

P.O. Box 94
Clifton, VA 20124
www.cliftonVA.org

Our Community, Our Clifton

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Display Ad Sizes and Rates:

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Full Page	\$160	New ad copy by: 20 th of the month prior to issue

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