

## Alexandria Times

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# People saving Alexandria's places

Long before the designation of National Preservation Week, historic preservation has been a priority in Alexandria. Alexandria has the third-oldest designated district in the nation, behind only Charleston, S.C., and New Orleans.

Alexandria designated the Old and Historic District in 1946. Historically African American Uptown was designated as the Parker-Gray Historic District in 1984. The establishment of the Alexandria Archaeological Commission in 1975, and the Archaeological Resource Protection Code, passed in 1989, were the first of their kind nationally and reinforced historic preservation as a priority in Alexandria through the guidance of city staff.

National Preservation Month started as National Preservation Week in 1973. In 2005, the National Trust expanded the celebration from a week to the entire month of May to allow for a fuller exploration of buildings and spaces of historical significance in a larger American history. This year's theme is "People Saving Places."

With that theme in mind, Historic Alexandria invites you to three Historic Preservation Events in May.

The highlight is the opening of the Lewis Cass White: Preserving the Legacy of Fort

Stevens Exhibit at Fort Ward on May 25. This exhibition commemorates the 160th anniversary of the Battle of Fort Stevens when President Abraham Lincoln came under fire, and the work of White, a veteran of that battle.

In the more than 50 years between the end of the Civil War and his death in 1916, White petitioned Congress to establish Fort Stevens as a national military park, helped erect a memorial stone recognizing the Lincoln incident and raised awareness for preserving the Defenses of Washington. To find out more about Lewis Cass White and the exhibit, readers can visit alexandriava.gov/museums/the-lewis-cass-white-collection.

Every Sunday in May, Gadsby's Tavern Museum offers a Peeling Back the Layers tour. Fans of antique firefighting equipment have a rare chance to see a muster of more than 15 antique, hand-drawn pieces of fire fighting equipment on May 18 at Friendship Firehouse Museum.

A major driver for historic preservation in Alexandria was the Bicentennial Celebration of 1976. Some of the buildings restored for the commemoration were The Lyceum, Carlyle House and the two buildings that compose Gadsby's Tavern Museum. After serving until the late 19th century as a tav-



PHOTO/THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON, D.C.

Group photograph of the 1911 dedication of the Lincoln Memorial Boulder at Fort Stevens. Lewis Cass White is standing in the middle of the top left row.

ern and hotel, the two Gadsby's buildings went through a variety of commercial uses and fell into disrepair.

In 1929, American Legion Post 24 purchased the buildings, saving them from demolition. In 1972, the buildings were given to the City of Alexandria, restored and reopened for the 1976 Bicentennial celebration. Today, visitors can tour the historic rooms of both buildings, restored to their 18th-century appearance.

Archaeological excavation, paint analysis and research of surviving documents have provided an accurate picture of the furnishings and use of the buildings in the period 1785

to 1808. The "Peeling Back the Layers," tour provides visitors the chance to go behind the scenes in spaces not normally open to the public to see how the buildings have changed over time. Tickets are available at alexandriava.gov/shop.

Historic Alexandria invites you to join us as we celebrate National Preservation Month's theme of "People Saving Places" as we recognize some of the contributors who dedicated time, energy and finances to preserve Alexandria's historic places.

*Out of the Attic is provided by the Office of Historic Alexandria.*