



November 2009

# Barcroft News

Vol 107, Issue 3

## President's Report

by *Bryant Monroe*

The October BSCL meeting featured a very informative visit from candidates on the November 6 ballot for the County Board seat and the State Delegate (47<sup>th</sup> District). We tried a new approach this time, with introductory remarks from each candidate (each were very interesting to this listener), followed by a "meet and greet" that gave neighbors and candidates the chance to talk informally. It seemed to work out well, although I welcome your feedback to guide us for future debate formats. Thanks to Jay Fiset, Joshua Ruebner, John Reeder, and Eric Brescia for joining us. Patrick Hope and James Lander were unable to make it, but offered to visit with the BSCL at our convenience.

**Don't forget to vote on Tuesday, November 3!** A very helpful sample ballot is on the County's website at [www.arlingtonva.us/departments/voterregistration/images/SampleBallot](http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/voterregistration/images/SampleBallot)

You may want to wander over to the **Barcroft Community House**. It looks wonderful courtesy of a fresh coat of paint and lots of sanding and scraping. Being an historic old building (built in 1908 and sold to the BSCL in 1914), our community's dedication and efforts over the generations has preserved this landmark as a resource for a wide variety of uses. Many thanks to **David Michaelson** for working the details and assuring that the painting work was completed prior to the wet and cold Fall weather. Funding for this work comes from donations over the last few years by generous Barcrofters.

The discussion of the proposed increase in BSCL dues (planned for the October meeting) was postponed and **will happen at the November 5 meeting**. Treasurer **Gary Lefebvre** will provide an overview of the BSCL budget, expenses and income, and his forecast of budget needs as costs increase to operate and maintain the Community House. The BSCL Executive Committee has proposed an increase BSCL dues to \$10 for an individual and \$15 per family based on the fact that the current dues rate is by far the lowest among all Arlington civic associations, and that costs associated with upkeep of the community house now outstrip our dues and rental income. Please let me know your thoughts, or attend the November meeting to voice your opinion on this issue.

In a sad note for the Columbia Pike community, Jim Whitaker (the Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization (CPRO) Director) has announced his resignation. The good news is that Barcroft's own **Pam Holcomb** will lead CPRO as the search and hiring process is completed. CPRO and the Barcroft community is fortunate to have her lead the great strides being made along the Pike.

Thank you to **Elaine Squeri** for many years of service to the BSCL as chair of the Traffic Committee. Her efforts for traffic calming resulted in our speed humps and other changes. The position is now vacant. If you are interested, please contact me.

I hope to see you November 5 at the BSCL meeting.

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**News Deadlines:** 15th day of the month preceding the issue month.

**BSCL Officers for 2008—2009**

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*Landscaping* Scott Brintzer, 892-0308  
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**Arlington County Civic Federation**

*Delegates* Eric Harold, Randy Swart,  
 Pat Williamson, Jim Kerr  
*Alternates* Karen Darner, David Michelson,  
 Elaine Squeri, Mark Wigfield

***Neighbor to Neighbor Ads***

**Teenage Babysitter** - Week nights and weekends:  
 Sarah @ 703-521-8756.

**Babysitter:** Red Cross certified tenth grader available for neighborhood babysitting. Call Abby at 703-892-1090.

**Rebekah's Pet Care** (walking, feeding, sitting)  
 703-521-8756.

**Yard Work:** Teenager available for raking leaves and other yard work. Call Thomas at 703-979-5838

**Babysitting:** Brother and sister, ages 14 and 15, can babysit in Barcroft, nights and weekends. Call Thomas or Allison at 703-979-5838.

**Mother's Helper/ Babysitting** service available from 16 year old CPR certified girl, responsible and great with kids. Available every day after 3:30 PM and weekends. Call Christy at (703)-300-1989.

**Ongoing Need:** For new or used baby items, clothing, books, educational toys, furniture, baby gates, household items, food, etc for the Even Start Program at Barcroft School. Call Jenny Lindenauer at 703-228-8846 or email jennifer\_lindenauer@apsva.us

**Wanted:****Stories and ideas for the Barcroft News**

Contact Kathy Kerr 703-892-6458 or email kathykerr@gmail.com. Do you have an interesting neighbor she should interview? Are you interesting yourself??

## A Basket Maker and a Wood Turner

**AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD** with Kathy Kerr

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At least one Barcrofter was thrilled by this year's bumper crop of acorns! **Barbara Weber** of 6<sup>th</sup> St. South is a basket maker. She uses the acorns to stain the baskets.

It all began about 9 years ago. Barbara attended a family reunion and a relative showed her how to weave baskets. Two years later, there was another reunion and more basket making. This time Barbara really got started. She orders reeds and rattan from specialty companies online. Before using it for weaving, she dyes it using Rit dye and allows the materials to dry. She weaves the basket and then often times will stain them. This is where the acorns come in.

She uses only acorns from white oak trees. Not red oak. Outdoors, she keeps a covered plastic bucket (not metal!) filled with ammonia. She puts the acorns in an old stocking or pillowcase and lets them soak there for about two weeks. The ammonia dissolves the tannins in the acorns, and it's the tannins that cause it to become a rich, dark brown oak stain. The stockings/pillow covers hold the acorns for easy removal and prevent sediment that comes from dirt or other materials that would affect the stain. She keeps the stain year round. She even still has a batch of this brew that she made from another prolific crop of acorns a few years ago.

To stain the baskets, Barbara then dips them into the mixture for a short time. They are then allowed to dry (and the ammonia odor of course goes away.) She usually applies a light coating of mineral oil as a sealant. Each basket usually takes a few days to make in order to go through all the steps.

Barbara currently has at least 100 baskets in her inventory ready for a number of upcoming holiday craft shows.

For more info, contact: **Barbara Weber**  
H: 703-553-9504 barbweber1@verizon.net

You may not have noticed a log in the gutter on 4<sup>th</sup> St. South but **Gary Trusty** on S. Woodstock St. took it home and allowed it to dry. He then put it on his lathe and transformed it into a beautiful bowl.

When he was about 14 years old, his father brought home a lathe. Gary was fascinated by it but there really wasn't room to use it. Then about ten years ago, Gary found he had the space in his home here in Barcroft to use a lathe and began wood turning.

He splits wood he finds and stores it to dry for about nine months. Then he cuts it to a rough shape and mounts it on the lathe. He begins to "turn" the wood to see what evolves. He might create a beautiful bowl. Then he sands it and uses steel wool. Sometimes he applies super glue to soft wood to make it stronger. He may apply some finish depending on if he wants it to be glossy or matte. He often applies three coats of finish and it has to dry for at least seven hours between each coat.

Recently Gary made a bowl from a dogwood tree that was cut down on S. Pershing St. He finds plenty of oak to use in his own back yard. Often the wood has surprise colors or knots and shapes that make each of his pieces unique.

Gary also makes wine stoppers, wooden bases for tea lights, potpourri holders and vases which have a water-proof "frog" inside to hold flowers without damaging the wood.

For more info, contact: **Gary Trusty**  
H: 703-920-4846 trusty619@verizon.net

**Works from these (and other) artists will be available at these upcoming Arlington art shows:**

- **Holiday House at Fort CF Smith**, 2411 N. 24th St. Dec. 12-20. Call 703-2430-329
- **Annual Artists Expo** sponsored by Congregation Etz Hayim w/ over 30 local artists. Sunday, November 15, 11:30 am to 4 pm at Long Branch Elementary School, at 33 North Fillmore Street Call 703 307 3205.

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## ARLINGTON HOUSE

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By Carol Harvey

The last time I visited Arlington House a costumed docent asked my son's Barcroft School class if anyone played the piano. Michael's hand went up and he was invited to step over the velvet rope and play the piano Robert E. Lee's daughters had played. Michael is out of college and pursuing a career as a professional musician (not in piano), so that tells you how long it's been since I'd stepped inside the icon of our county.

I signed up for a special WETA preview of its new Ken Burns National Parks series on the national parks. I sat with a few dozen others on the steps of Arlington House overlooking the city at sundown, as historians told the stories of people who walked these same steps – soldiers, statesmen, slaves.

Elizabeth Pryor, author of *Reading the Man*, based on the personal letters of Robert E. Lee, told how the house was built by George Washington Parke Custis as a tribute to George Washington. The Washington's had adopted Custis as an infant after his father, Martha's son by her first husband, died of camp fever at Yorktown. George Washington Parke Custis maintained a lifelong love and dedication to the first President and vowed to keep his memory and legacy alive. When he inherited land up river from Mount Vernon he called it "Mount Washington" and was determined to build a stately home, clearly visible from the capital city across the river, that would display and preserve the Washington furnishings and artifacts he had inherited and purchased. Living in a small cottage, he gradually cleared the land, began to farm, and acquired the services of George Hadfield who was overseeing construction of the Capitol.

Fancy ornamentation would not be visible from such a distance, so he opted for sturdy simplicity and good proportions. High ceilings and plain walls

would display the many portraits Custis possessed. As was the case with the Capitol itself, the north and south wings were built first, with the center grand section following as funds became available.

As tribute to Washington, Custis wanted to have a model farm using the latest scientific techniques to keep the land fertile. Custis inaugurated an annual fair designed to improve agricultural practices, particularly the breeding of fine-wooled sheep. Beginning in 1803, Custis invited the local gentry to exhibit their best sheep and homespun cloth at Arlington Spring, near the river. After prizes had been awarded, the fair closed with patriotic speeches and a great dinner under the tent which had been used by Washington during the Revolution.

Custis advocated creating a government department to promote the best farming techniques. Thus, Arlington was a pre-cursor to the Department of Agriculture.

Custis' only daughter married a soldier named Robert E. Lee. The couple and their growing family lived at Arlington House along with her parents. Robert E. Lee loved Arlington House as Washington had loved Mount Vernon. As an army officer, Lee travelled often and far, fighting in Mexico and Texas. He served as Commander of West Point Military Academy. His family stayed in NY during the spring and summer and returned to Arlington House for the winter. Although his father-in-law supported the newest farming techniques, he showed far less interest in financial affairs. After Custis' death there were deep debts and Lee worked hard to make the farm profitable to pay them off. This hard work gave him a deeper understanding of the problems faced by his kinsmen and reaffirmed his belief that his first loyalty was to Virginia.

When Virginia voted to leave the union Lee agonized over continuing to serve in his Army

commission. He paced the portico and under the trees the trees of Arlington House, praying through the night before reaching the agonizing decision to fight against the Government he had fought for during his long military career. He would stand by Virginia. He left the next morning, not knowing that he would never return to Arlington House, praying through the night before reaching the agonizing decision to fight against the Government he had fought for during his long military career. He saw it only once, years later, from a distant train window.

Mrs. Lee and the children hastily packed their belongings, taking particular care to wrap and hide the Washington legacy portraits and artifacts. Mrs. Lee had been gone only a few days when the Federal Army crossed the river and occupied the heights opposite the National Capital. Overnight, what had been a quiet country estate was transformed into a vast military encampment. New roads were cut through the woods and much of it felled to open fields of fire for the earthen forts being built just west of the house.

On the battlefield, the qualities developed by Lee's years in the army and his home life made him the military champion of the South and its greatest hero. His self-discipline, humility, simplicity, along with his kindness and courtesy to all regardless of rank, won him the devotion of his officers and men, while his military leadership gave hope and fighting spirit to the entire South. He was seen as a knightly Christian gentleman, humane and magnanimous in victory or defeat.

Early in 1862, the army moved from Arlington for service in the field, but the mansion continued to be used as a headquarters. In 1864, the Government levied a tax on the Arlington estate. Because Mrs. Lee was unable to appear personally, payment through her agent was refused and the property was sold at public auction. In June 1862 the first burials were made in 200 acres set aside as a national cemetery.

Lee's leadership continued after the war. As president of Washington College (afterwards Washington and Lee University), he devoted himself to restoring the South culturally, economically, and politically. He urged Southerners to relinquish hatred and make the best of their situation. By his advice and example he promoted true restoration of the Union, not by force, but by the stronger bonds of reconciliation and a common loyalty.

For a time General Lee hoped to regain possession of Arlington for his wife, but he died in 1870 without having recovered it. Mrs. Lee died 3 years later, and her son Custis took legal action to obtain his inheritance. In 1882, the Supreme Court finally decided the case in his favor. Since thousands of soldiers had been buried at Arlington, Custis Lee accepted the offer of the Government to buy the property for \$150,000.

Originally "Arlington House" had been famous for its associations with George Washington, but after the Civil War it became even more widely known as the former home of General Lee. Though its rooms were empty, thousands from all over the country came to see it each year because of the universal admiration for its former master. It was in response to this sentiment that Congress passed legislation in 1925 authorizing restoration of the mansion as a national memorial.

After watching the WETA preview on the magnificent national parks on the front lawn of Arlington House, I eagerly entered our own Park Service property. I was shocked to find bare plaster, studs and torn out walls. Where were the velvet ropes and piano?

The stately home is crumbling and needs a massive renovation. Local citizens who love the house and what it stands for recently rallied to support restoration. Working with the Park Service, they are raising funds to maintain what George Washington Parke Custis began as his personal tribute that continues today as a tribute the leadership and reconciling spirit of his son-in-law, Robert E. Lee.

## Barcroft Elementary

Barcroft Elementary is looking for volunteers to serve as tutoring buddies in reading and math, and also helping in a Homework Club. If you have at least thirty minutes to spare once a week, please call the school at 703-228-5838 and speak to Mrs. Karla Mora.

High school students, older scouts, friends and neighbors are all welcome to join us. We'll provide the training - you provide the invaluable help!

Watch for Barcroft's fabulous bakers who will provide **coffee and homemade treats for sale on Election Day - come hungry!**

**Help support Barcroft School!** Link your Harris Teeter card to the Barcroft School. It's free, but it has to be re-linked every year.

[http://www.harristeeter.com/community/together\\_in\\_education/link\\_to\\_your\\_school.aspx](http://www.harristeeter.com/community/together_in_education/link_to_your_school.aspx)

### November Events:

- Garden Work Day (Nov 7th 9am)
- Kindergarten Open House (Nov 12th 9:30 am)
- Family Academic Night on Economics (Nov 17th)
- America Recycles day and Waste Free Lunch Day (Nov 19th)
- Family Fitness Night (Nov 20th 6:30)

### December Events:

- Pasta Dinner to support Girls on the Run and the track (Dec 3rd 6:30)
- Kindergarten Open House (Dec 10th 9:30 am)
- Winter Concert (Dec 10th evening)
- Leonardo Learning Day Open House (Dec 17th 9-3pm)

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## Kenmore Middle School

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Students from **Kenmore** spent an evening on the south lawn of the White House viewing the stars. On Oct. 7, President Obama hosted Astronomy Night for 150 local students.

The evening was a way to increase awareness of the incredible discoveries, inspiration, and expansion of human knowledge that the field of astronomy can deliver.

Students met astronauts Sally Ride, John Grunsfeld and Buzz Aldren.

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## Wakefield High School

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Come experience the Marching Warriors in concert inside the Wakefield auditorium. If you missed them at the games, now you can see them where it's warm and dry!

The show will be on Thursday, November 5 at 7:30 PM. Everyone is welcome.




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## Around Town

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### Deter Auto Theft!

#### Free VIN etching offered to vehicle owners

The Arlington County Police Department invites citizens to a free event **Saturday, November 7th** from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Arlington County Fire Station #1, 500 S. Glebe Rd.

Have your Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) etched into car exterior windows. It's a quick, simple process.

VIN etching does not affect the appearance of the vehicle. Etchers chemically engrave the VIN onto the main windows of the vehicle in inconspicuous locations. Some insurance companies offer discounts if you have this done. It virtually eliminates any potential profit professional thieves might get from selling windows, windshields, through chop shops.

Numerous displays will be on hand to include Fire Apparatus which is always a favorite for kids of all ages. Also, vehicles and equipment used to combat auto theft will be on display.

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### New Gas Station Nearby

Work at the former Shell service station at the corner of S. George Mason and the Pike continues with the installation of new underground tanks. It will reopen for business in November as an independent gas station called Car Place at Barcroft, and a garage called George Mason Auto Repair.

## Around Town

Arlington House is a national treasure, but we have the honor of taking its name and architecture as a symbol for our own community. You can support its continuing legacy by joining Save Historic Arlington House, a group formed in support for the Robert E. Lee Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery.

The leadership board includes: Robert E. Lee IV (a direct descendant of Robert E. Lee); Wayne Parks (the great great grandson of Jim Parks, one of Arlington's enslaved families); Letitia Grant (both a Lee and Grant descendant); General Montgomery Meigs (great nephew of President Lincoln's Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs who established the National Cemetery at Arlington); Elizabeth Pryor (the nation's leading Lee scholar and author of "Reading the Man," and others dedicated to preserving the lessons and legacy of the people who lived and worked in this historic home.

The group invites your contributions to help restore the home to its 1860 appearance. Go to [www.friendsofaronlinehouse.org/](http://www.friendsofaronlinehouse.org/)



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### The Barcroft Community Playgroup

meets 9:30-11:30am Friday mornings  
at the Barcroft Community House.

Children from birth up are welcome.

Please contact Jennifer Lis  
([jjlis@comcast.net](mailto:jjlis@comcast.net)) or Julie Smith  
([jds342000@gmail.com](mailto:jds342000@gmail.com)),  
or just stop by!



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## Join the BSCL—It's never too late!



**Dues are still only \$3 per adult or \$6 per couple**

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4701 Arlington Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22203

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### Real Estate Market Trends

The Northern Virginia Association of Realtors® reports on September 2009 home sales activity for Fairfax and Arlington counties, Alexandria, Fairfax & Falls Church Cities, & towns of Vienna, Herndon and Clifton.

A total of 1,684 homes sold in Sept. 2009, a 2% increase above Sept. 2008 home sales of 1,650.

Active listings decreased by 24.40% from last year, with 6,889 active listings in 9/09, compared with 9,112 active homes available in Sept. 2008.

The average days on market (DOM) for homes in September 2009 decreased by 32.26% to 63 days, compared with 93 days in August 2008.

The Average Sales price increased 4.94% Sept. 2009 averaging \$427,881, compared with last August's average of \$407,748.

Pending home sales in Northern Virginia in Sept. 2009 increased 13.22 % at 2,012 units compared to 1,777 in Sept. 2008.

Year to date - 14 homes sold & settled in Barcroft. Average price = \$548,129. High of \$740,000, and low of \$367,900.

Consumer confidence has been strong for home purchases in our local market.

Sellers who price accurately are getting close to or their list price, and escalation addendums and multiple offers are making their comeback as well in some scenarios.

***Buyers: It's a great time to buy!***

FHA loans up to \$729,750 with only 3.5% down are available to all qualified buyers, not just first time buyers!

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