

Clifton Clatter



Summer 2020

A publication of the Clifton Betterment Association

www.cliftonva.org

Vol. 58, Issue 2



President's Corner

Sadly we have decided there will be no Clifton Day 2020. I am sad for all the non-profits that will be without the income from the event including the Scouts, Acacia Lodge, Churches and NVTRP. Please support these groups through the fall in any way you can. If you have an idea for helping them with fundraising, please reach out. The Haunted Trail has also been canceled. We still have the 5K scheduled for November.... Fingers crossed!

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

DATES FOR YOUR CALENDAR!

October 11	Clifton Day—Canceled
October	Clifton Haunted Trail—Canceled
*November 14	Clifton Caboose Twilight Run
*	Tentative



Historic Clifton

Clifton's Early History: The African American Heritage of the Beckwith's Descendants & Earliest Clifton, Virginia's Residents

June 30, 2020 – Lynne Garvey-Hodge, Fairfax County History Commission, "Clifton Clatter – July, 2020"

During this time of "Black Lives Matter" and Clifton's sincere interest in maintaining peace, kindness and inclusivity, this summary of our town's earliest days, its economic metamorphosis and the interracial dynamics therein, are well worth noting.

For several generations, much of Virginia's Commonwealth experienced a "plantation" way of life and Northern Virginia was no exception. The plantations of Mt. Vernon, Woodlawn, Arlington House, Ravensworth and others are a testimony to this heritage and history. The passionate reaction of "Union" citizens desirous of 4,000,000 slaves losing their shackles in the name of human freedom - clashed loudly, indescribably and horrifically with "Confederates" fearful of losing a slave base to their economy, which fueled not just the south – but the north AND the United Kingdom. Cotton, in all its various forms from curtains to clothing, was KING and had become an essential component of America's economic fabric. Did you know that the clothing company Brooks Brothers began as a producer of thin, sheer robes placed on auction-blocked slaves? That Aetna, AIG and New York Life began their corporate presence providing insurance policies to slave owners to insure their slave properties? Yes, much was intricately interwoven and the area of Clifton, Virginia followed suit.

The earliest known land grant for our area can be traced to 1607, when Captain John Smith (and others including Christopher Newport) founded Jamestown. By 1649 the English Northern Neck Proprietaries had claimed an immense amount of land north and west of the James River and present day Fairfax County was part of that claim. By 1690 the English Culpeper and then Fairfax families, controlled the land between the Potomac River and the Rappahannock and then on to the Fairfax family with Thomas, Sixth Lord Fairfax as overseer, and his cousin, William as private land agent. By 1710, the Clifton area was being bought up by Englishmen. By 1745, the English Privy Council had confirmed 5,282,000 acres to Lord Fairfax. The area included a 424 acreage owned by Ann and Charles Tyler, then purchased and added onto by Marmaduke Beckwith the Younger, creating land holdings of 1,200 acres on Popes Head Creek. The land was eventually held by his descendant, William E. Beckwith who operated a plantation on the land. Upon William E.'s death, his Will declared that his 16 slaves, including William and Harriet Harris and their five children, be freed and some 200 acres of land be bequeathed to them. Several of the 16 slaves were in fact, Beckwith's own children. Ironically, Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and William Beckwith's death both occurred in January, 1863. It does not appear the Harris family was related to William. At the time of their manumission, the Harris slaves lived north of the Orange and Alexandria railroad. The specific circumstances around the conception of these several slaves whom William fathered are clearly lost to time. By 1871, this collection of 16 freed slaves had built a Primitive Baptist Church for their worship and education space, still standing today. In this way and in looking out for one another, it is clear the Harris family and freed slaves embraced and continued to support one another as free citizens while the pages of history turned.

The Clifton land was jointly owned by each of the freed slaves and members of the Harris family. One parcel came to be known as the "Harris land" and it's 77 acres, as such, was left undivided. As older children came of age, the family did not divide the tract into equal shares but decided to take advantage of the land's location near the railroad and to establish a small village with divided lots. Herein, is the actual birthplace of the village we now call Clifton, founded by the Harris family. At the time, a Thomas Moore was a commissioner of the Fairfax County court and oversaw the property division, sales and records of the deeds. As the funds were received, Commissioner Moore distributed the money to the Harris family. As the funds were distributed, many Harris family members left the area.

The first sale of the Harris divided "village" land was to a Northerner from Ontario, New York, Harrison G. Otis. He purchased 2 acres of the northeast corner of the Harris property for \$100.00 on June 1, 1868. Triangular in shape, it was located on the east side of Main Street. This land already had been noted during the Civil War as Stop #6 on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad (named Devereux Station during the war). Legend has it that Otis had been a passenger on a train passing through the area during the Civil War, heard an inebriated pig squealing and so determined the area was clearly fit for farming and raising animals. Harrison G. Otis and William Harris, are then considered the "Fathers" of Clifton. Upon Otis's return, he built Clifton's first hotel, The Clifton House, which was opened for business by 1869. Harrison and Mary Otis signed a deed of trust establishing that the Clifton Presbyterian Church be built on land, behind the hotel, on June 30, 1873 for a \$5.00 payment of a portion of the Otis property. The deed stated, "the church Lot to be forever occupied as a site for a Presbyterian Church." The church's initial cornerstone was laid on 1871 and is still a vibrant presence in the life of Clifton today.

A formal train depot and steam-powered saw mill were constructed on Otis' piece of land and the train station, dropped the name Devereux (Devereux was the name of the Abraham Lincoln's hand-picked Federal "General" who oversaw the Civil War Union military railroads from 1862-1864; after serving the Union, he returned to Cleveland, Ohio to oversee four different railroad companies) and now became known as Clifton Station. (By 1902, the Town of Clifton was incorporated and the name officially changing for the post office in 1940, as another Clifton Station was located in southwestern Virginia, making mail delivery confusing.) The station opened in November 1868 with E. B. Georgia appointed as the first station agent. It was anticipated at the time that a village would be established at the depot. In November 1869, Otis also applied to open a post office at Clifton Station and became the town's first Postmaster. The makings of a village, filled with new Northern neighbors and local African Americans, was underway. In addition to Lot #3, Otis had, in December, 1867, entered into an agreement with the Beckwith estate to purchase almost 1,000 acres on the north side of the railroad. The land was rich in timber, principally white oak, thus making good business and economic sense for Otis to have a saw mill conveniently located next to the railroad stop. While not in any official record, it is easy to imagine that the labor force serving the blossoming town was a mix of white and black workers. Otis promoted land sales in the area, though he generally sold parcels north of the railroad measuring 30 to 50 acres. Various records indicate that a William Harris may have constructed his home on Main Street at this time, others indicate he landed at what has come to be called The Beckwith House on Chapel Street. Then, with a mix of neighbors in the new village, early Clifton Station was a thriving mixed race community.

As the last Harris family land holdings were sold, so left many of the original Harris family members and their African American presence. However, another descendant and yet another William E. Beckwith, remained in town. His slave grandmother was once the property of William E. Beckwith. A 1960 photo shows William happily sitting in a rocking chair on what was once his little cottage porch on Harris Street (it is no longer standing; the street is now called Chapel Street). His home sat across from the Mayhugh Tavern (also called, "Gustie, 'Grandpap' Mayhugh's Home and Oasis", formerly home to Pam & Bob Wallace and now most recently the Bittner family. For some time in the earlier 20th century, the home was owned by Emlyn Bryant, father of Cunningham Bryant, the first black general in the National Guard. Directly west of the "Mayhugh" Tavern sat what has commonly been called the oldest house in Clifton, the "Beckwith House" or "The Old Homestead". Originally a log cabin, it was built by William E. Beckwith, c. 1850. Having been extensively remodeled through the years, it has been occupied by Suzanne & Chris Rehder (Suzanne was formerly the Director of the Fairfax Public Library's Virginia Room and member of the Fairfax County History Commission), Robin Graine and family, and most recently, Mark & Mona Harrington.

With the Reconstruction Era of the Civil War unfolding, the economy of Clifton began to take a more prosperous, robust and interracial turn. Four churches and three schools dotted the town landscape and in the early 20th century, the influx of new neighbors was significant. The town had a more racially mixed, cosmopolitan feel. Articles in the "Fairfax Herald" describing and promoting the town to Northerners looking for a new life, were highly successful. In the December 2, 1904 weekly *Fairfax Herald* the "Clifton" column beautifully described the little town. The town was young, vibrant and oh so proud of its citizenry at the beginning of that Holiday Season! There is a reference to the "colored" cobbler in town – which reflected not just the vernacular of the time, but also an appeal to wealthy "Northerners" to move to a progressive & prosperous area. The enterprising R. Benton Fistengle ran a cobbler/shoemaker's shop on the Lot 3 that he had purchased in 1869 for \$60.00. It sat near the Presbyterian church on North Railroad Street. The following year, he is listed in the census as a 28-year old shoemaker of mixed race, (listed just before William Harris) with real estate valued at \$100. Subsequent records indicate a house on the lot by 1875, when the building was assessed at \$200.00. In 1880, the house and lot were valued at \$300, with the household and kitchen furniture valued at \$75. He also had two hogs valued at \$5.00 and shoemaker's tools, stacks of shoes and leather valued at \$100.00. Fistengle owned this lot and practiced his craft until 1919. Clearly, Fistengle, Harris and others who attended the Primitive Baptist Church lived comfortably amidst a community that prided itself on a progressive mix of blacks and whites.

The early – mid 20th century saw a continuation of Clifton's co-existence between black and white neighbors, despite common segregation practices. While Brooks Brothers favored a more sophisticated clientele and insurance companies insured automobiles, homes and other items – the fabric of America's Virginia culture changed significantly from a time and place where plantations abounded and humans were bound by bondage. In a future column, we will hear stories of neighborliness, support and encouragement within the community as a whole. However, much of the peace and serenity of early historic Clifton gave way to some levels of civil unrest in the 1960's. Such was a time when many Americans began to work mightily to change the landscape of our nation and our land toward a greater level of equality and mutual acceptance of different races and genders – values we yet attempt to embrace in this space and time.

Historic Clifton

[Note: Additional information about the 7 remaining plots of Harris land is reviewed in great detail in Debbie Robison's "The Formation of the Village of Clifton" which can be found at: <http://www.novahistory.org/CliftonFormation/CliftonFormation.html>.]

Sources used for this article include:

"Clifton", Arcadia Publishers, Lynne Garvey-Hodge, Author

"Clifton: Brigadoon in Virginia", published by the Clifton Betterment Association, Nan Netherton, Author



The Beckwith House, c. 1968

Believed to have been built around 1771, this house encompasses an early log cabin, clearly visible within the dining room area of the home. County records indicate a building date of closer to 1850, however, the log cabin itself may be dated to the 18th century date.

When the original Clifton family line of the William E. Beckwith family died, this house and some 200 acres of land were passed on to the 16 surviving slaves of the property, who were also then emancipated in 1863.

This property is also referred to as "The Old Homestead".

(photo courtesy of Susan Hellman, Fairfax County Department of Planning & Zoning)



Town of Clifton Landscape, c. 1900

(courtesy of the Virginia Room, Fairfax City Library)



Pandemic Adjustments

It was a bit tricky to pass the gavel at the Zoom installation of our new Republican Women of Clifton (RWC) president, Alice Butler-Short, but we succeeded. Now the club is pulling together to face the challenging issues of the day.

Members are becoming more technologically adept with the use of Zoom for board and general membership meetings. We have had great speakers to include Stephen Moore, the President's economic advisor.

Distressed over the economic impact of the closure of small businesses and the increased workload of first responders, we collected gift cards to distribute to them in Clifton and surrounding areas as a show of support. We offered to go grocery shopping for people who needed help or were leery of venturing out.

Members have staffed the Republican tent at the Burke Farmers Market and have been busy informing voters of the June 23 primary for U.S. Senate as well as the 10th and 11th District Conventions held to select the Republican candidates for U.S. Congress. The confusion caused by date and location changes due to the coronavirus was overcome and Republicans now have stellar candidates: Daniel Gade for U.S. Senate and two forceful women for U.S. Congress, Aliscia Andrews (10th) and Manga Anantamula (11th). As you might imagine, many volunteer opportunities come with these campaigns. Check out our website as well as the Fairfax County Republican Committee website (FairfaxGOP.org) and see what fits into your schedule.

A fun highlight at the market has been the distribution of complimentary handmade masks for adults and children. Bonnie Burkhardt, who happens to be the newly-elected 1st Vice President of the Virginia Federation of Republican Women, is the incredible seamstress who sewed the dozens of masks for the shoppers. We are handing out "Thin Blue Line" flags in support of law and order. It is important we are all aware that law and order is more than a tv show.

We are also becoming acutely aware that "ignorance is dangerous," especially in a Representative Democracy such as ours. Groups can take over and cause chaos and destruction in the name of sympathetic support for a specific cause. Whatever group you may be attracted to, research their background and follow the money. You owe that to America and to all her people.

"Happy Birthday, America!" May we continue to hone you into an even more perfect union. Please visit www.CliftonGOP.com and join us on the Trump train. We have lots of socially distanced seats onboard!





While the COVID-19 shutdown caused the Democratic Women of Clifton and Northern Virginia (DWCNV) to postpone in-person meetings in March (on the economy) and April (on the environment), we have not been idle. Members are proud to support our soon-to-be Presidential nominee, Joe Biden, and will virtually campaign for him and our congressional candidates right up until Election Day, November 3rd, now a state holiday in Virginia. We will encourage voters to vote in November, continue to register new voters, and promote absentee voting for safety reasons. Thanks to a new state law, any registered voter will be able to vote absentee without having to give a reason. Each of us has a voice when we vote.

During the past four months our members have participated in marches and rallies for equal justice and have joined virtual meetings with a variety of speakers and groups—listening, learning, and speaking out.

We will be hosting a virtual General Meeting in July on the environment. Our successful and active book club continues to meet all summer virtually. Contact us at cliftonwomendems@aol.com if you have questions.

Political Action Alerts continue to be sent out to members on important issues, and our Campaigns and Elections Committee is sending out emails on the needs of our Democratic candidates.

Normally during the summer, we would be participating in the various Fourth of July parades held in Northern Virginia. We would be hosting a pool party and having dinners at local restaurants. We hope to get back to a “new normal” that will include some of these activities, but please know that while the virus has altered our lives and ability to be together, our spirit and resolve continue, stronger than ever.



The 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.

For more information, 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>.

Around Clifton

Last week, Senator George Barker (SD-39) and Delegate Dan Helmer (HD-40) had a "soft opening" of their new legislative office in downtown Clifton. Following a historic 2020 legislative session in Richmond, Senator Barker and Delegate Helmer are eagerly continuing their work for their constituents and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

As Northern Virginia enters Phase 2 of the Commonwealth's re-opening, and beyond, the new district office will provide the legislators and their staff the physical space to serve the community in a safe fashion. The office will be staffed by Andrew Millin, Legislative Aide to Senator Barker and Noah Bardash, Chief of Staff to Delegate Helmer.

We look forward to a time in the near future, when it is safe to do so, to host a grand opening office launch party with the general public. This will provide an opportunity for the residents of both districts to meet the legislators and their staff. We hope that our office will be a welcoming place for those in need of assistance.

In the meantime, our offices remain available to help constituents who are having difficulties with state agencies, particularly those that are having difficulties getting unemployment. You can contact Senator Barker's office at district39@senate.virginia.gov and Delegate Helmer's office at DelDHelmer@house.virginia.gov.



Image Caption: L to R, Noah Bardash, Legislative Assistant for Del. Helmer; Delegate Dan Helmer; Senator George Barker; Andrew Millin, Legislative Assistant for Sen. Barker.

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 disabili-

Around Clifton

Join NVTRP for SUMMER CAMP!

- Riding lessons and a wide variety of educational, hands-on horsemanship activities and games.
- Campers will learn the responsibility of caring for horses in a fun, relaxed environment.
- Health precautions and procedures in place.



Contact Olivia Taylor at otaylor@nvtrp.org
Or register at: www.NVTRP.org

Around Clifton

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Clifton Cooks!

We thought it would be fun to print some recipes from the [Clifton Gatherings : A Clifton Community Cookbook](#), printed in the early 90's. This recipe is from the The Family Fourth . Enjoy!

STUFFED VINE-RIPENED TOMATOES

8 medium tomatoes	3 c. fresh corn, cooked and cut from the cob or 2 (16 oz.) cans whole kernel corn, drained
1 lb. thick sliced bacon	1 (8 oz.) pkg. unseasoned croutons
Salt and pepper to taste	
1 medium green pepper, chopped	
1 medium onion, chopped	

Preheat oven to 350°. Core 8 tomatoes. Scoop out insides with a spoon and place insides in a mixing bowl. Sprinkle small amount of salt into tomato cavity and turn, upside down to drain. Cut 1 pound bacon into small pieces and cook until crisp. Set aside.

Saute green pepper and onion in small amount of bacon grease. Add to tomato mixture. Add corn, salt, and pepper to taste; mix well. Add bacon pieces, reserving some to crumble on top of finished product. Stir tomato mixture thoroughly. Add croutons and toss gently.

Turn tomatoes upright and fill with mixture. Place in 10x13 inch baking dish and put extra mixture around tomatoes. Sprinkle reserved bacon on top and bake for 30 to 45 minutes. Serves 8.

Alma Lynn Wendell



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.

If you know that your membership has lapsed, please go ahead and renew online (<http://www.signmeup.com/site/reg/register.aspx?fid=6X2VMJ7>). You can also send in the form in the Clatter via snail mail.

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.



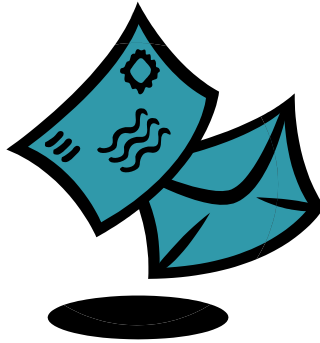
Ideas for articles, etc. for the Clatter? Please contact cliftonclatter@gmail.com



ideas

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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Email Address: _____ Phone: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Special Instructions: _____

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