



VOLUME XXVIII

NUMBER 4

NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2009

---

### **APRIL MEETING**

**DATE:** Wednesday, April 22, 2009

**PLACE:** The Lyceum, 201 South Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia

**TIME:** 7:30 PM

**SPEAKER:** Dr. Ben Vinson, III, Professor, Johns Hopkins University

## **2009 Annual Alexandria History Awards**

**The 2009 Alexandria History Awards will be presented by  
Senator Patsy Ticer**

**Mary V. Thompson,  
will receive the**

**2009 Alexandria Historical Society City History Award**

**Special Awards will be given to Char McCargo Bah,  
Rosalind Bovey, and Leland & Janet Ness**

**Alexandria Historical Society High School History Awards  
will be presented to:**

**Patrick White—T.C. Williams High School**

**Charles Snow—Episcopal High School**

**Emily Conron—Bishop Ireton High School**

**Sarah Mathiesen—St. Stephen's and St. Agnes High School**

**Short Lecture by Dr. Ben Vinson, III**

Dr. Ben Vinson, III, who received a 1988 Alexandria High School History Award, is a Professor of History at Johns Hopkins University and Director of their Center for Africana Studies. He will speak on "Making History: A Historian's Tale from Being a High School Student to Being a Professional Historian."

**A reception, with refreshments, will follow the program.**

**Alexandria History Award Selections.** Mary V. Thompson will receive the 2009 Alexandria History Award on April 22 for her new book, *“In the Hands of a Good Providence”: Religion in the Life of George Washington*. Mary Thompson has worked at Mount Vernon for over 28 years as a mansion docent, curatorial assistant, and museum registrar. For the past ten years, she has served as Mount Vernon’s Research Historian, where she has conducted groundbreaking investigations of amazingly diverse topics, ranging from slavery and religion, to the personalities of George and Martha Washington’s favorite pets, to the delicacies that appeared on their table. Few individuals have made so many noteworthy contributions to the preservation and promulgation of knowledge about Alexandria’s most famous son, George Washington. Ms. Thompson will be our speaker at the June 24 Alexandria Historical Society meeting.

Special Awards will be presented to Char Bah for her genealogical work in discovering descendants of African Americans buried in Freedmen’s Cemetery; to Rosalind Bovey for her work as a long-time history advocate in Alexandria as President of the Friends of Carlyle House, as an editor and writer of her neighborhood history in *North Ridge Lore*, and as a Board member of Agenda Alexandria; and to Leland and Janet Ness for their research and efforts in helping the city celebrate the Del Ray Centennial, including a lecture before the Alexandria Historical Society.

Senator Patsy Ticer will present the 2009 Alexandria High School History Awards to Patrick White, Charles Snow, Emily Conron, and Sarah Mathiesen

**About Our April 22 Speaker.** Our April 22 speaker will be Dr. Ben Vinson III, who received a 1988 Alexandria High School History Award. This inspired him to pursue history as an undergraduate at Dartmouth and to eventually get a Ph.D. in history from Columbia. Today, he is Professor of American History at the Johns Hopkins University and Director of their Center for Africana Studies. Prior to joining the Johns Hopkins faculty, he taught at Barnard College and Penn State University. Also, he has held fellowships from the Fulbright Commission, the National Humanities Center, the Social Sciences Research Council, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Mellon Foundation.

Dr. Vinson is a Latin American Historian with a particular interest in race relations, especially the experience of the African Diaspora. While his research focuses on colonial Mexico, he has a broader range of interests that includes the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. He is also interested in transnational networks, including the experiences between African-Americans and Latinos (as well as Afro-Latinos). He has written a number of articles and books on these themes, including *Bearing Arms for His Majesty: The Free-Colored Militia in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, 2001), *Flight: The Story of Virgil Richardson, a Tuskegee Airman in Mexico* (Palgrave, 2004), and *Afromexico* (Fondo de Cultura Economica, 2004). He has forthcoming work appearing on the experience of Afro-Mexicans in North Carolina. However, his current book-length project involves an assessment of the Mexican colonial caste system – particularly the experiences that he calls the ‘forgotten casts’ – lobos, moriscos, coyotes, and chinos. He is also working on a 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Herbert Klein’s *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*. His teaching interests range broadly as well – encompassing courses on the Latin American colonial experience, family social history, the African Diaspora, and race-relations in Latin America.

**May 27 Society Meeting (7:30 PM at The Lyceum) – “Mary Surratt: An American Tragedy” Lecture by Elizabeth Steger Trindal.** In commemoration of the Bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln, Elizabeth Steger Trindal, author of *Mary Surratt: An American Tragedy*, will tell the controversial story of Mary Surratt. On July 7, 1865, Mary Elizabeth Jenkins Surratt was hanged as one of the alleged conspirators in the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. She was born in 1823 near what is now Clinton, Maryland. From November 26, 1835, until 1839, she attended the Academy for Young Ladies, which was affiliated with St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Alexandria. The Academy was located at the corner of Duke and Fairfax Streets. It closed in 1839, and the building eventually was demolished for a parking lot.

Ms. Trindal’s talk will encompass Mary Surratt’s years at the Academy; her unhappy marriage to John Surratt; her children; her life during the Civil War; the death of her husband; her move to Washington, DC; establishing a boarding house on H Street; meeting John Wilkes Booth; the death of the President; her arrest; her trial; and finally her execution. Ms. Trindal argues that Mary Surratt was innocent.



Elizabeth Steger Trindal was born in Alexandria, and is a long-time member of the Alexandria Historical Society. Prior to her husband’s retirement as an engineer at Fort Belvoir, she lived near Mount Vernon, but she currently lives in the Shenandoah Valley. During her working years, she was a collection officer with the Internal Revenue Service in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. An award-winning free lance writer, Ms. Trindal is past president and vice president of the National League of American Pen Women, Valley of Virginia Branch. She devoted fifteen years to researching and writing *Mary Surratt: An American Tragedy*.

**June 24 Society Meeting (7:30 PM at The Lyceum) – “In the Hands of a Good Providence: Religion in the Life of George Washington” Lecture by Mary V. Thompson.** Mary V. Thompson, the research historian at Mount Vernon and recipient of the 2009 Alexandria History Award, will discuss her new book *“In the Hands of a Good Providence”: Religion in the Life of George Washington*. George Washington’s religious practices and beliefs have been very controversial subjects in the past, and this book no doubt will become the definitive authority on those subjects. *“In the Hands of a Good Providence”* moves beyond modern arguments regarding whether The Father of Our Country was an evangelical Christian or a Deist. Thompson concludes that Washington was a devout Anglican of a Latitudinarian bent. She focuses on the important place religion occupied in his life, as well as his support for religious freedom in the early development of our country. Regardless of his personal preference for a specific denomination, Washington believed that religion was an important aspect of a strong and successful nation. He often expressed an opinion that a nation needed a set of shared values, and that religion encouraged a sense of morality, civility, and concern for fellow citizens. Much of his religious philosophy was formed in Alexandria.



## ALEXANDRIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. NEWSLETTER

201 SOUTH WASHINGTON STREET, ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314

**President: Audrey Davis, (703) 838-4356, Ext. 11**  
**Newsletter Editor: Bob Madison, (703) 683-2636**

The AHS Newsletter is published by the Alexandria Historical Society, Inc., and mailed free to members. To join the Society, submit your check made payable to "Alexandria Historical Society," together with your name, address, and telephone numbers, to the Alexandria Historical Society, 201 South Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314. Annual dues are: \$10.00, Student; \$20.00, Single; \$30.00, Couple; \$50.00, Sustaining; and \$100.00, Patron. The membership year is July to June. Dues are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

*The purpose of the Society shall be to promote an active interest in American history and particularly in the history of Alexandria and of Virginia.  
The Society is organized exclusively for educational purposes.*

**VISIT OUR WEB SITE:**  
**[www.alexandriahistorical.org](http://www.alexandriahistorical.org)**

