

Huntley Headlines

Friends of Historic Huntley

Spring 2025

Art & Architecture Day at Historic Huntley

Saturday, April 5, free
1:00-3:00 p.m. activities
3:00-4:00 p.m. artist reception

FOHH's signature annual open-house event, **Art & Architecture Day**, returns! From 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. **watch artists at work "en plein air"** (painting outdoors), **enjoy free tours** of the site's federal-period structures in the context of a carefully designed landscape, **see art connected to Huntley**, and **browse and buy history and other non-fiction titles from FOHH's used book sale**.

At an **informal reception for the artists** from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m., the works painted during the day will be available for public viewing and sale.

The event and all activities are free.

An image of Huntley as both art and inspiration from Art & Architecture Day 2024. Painting by Deborah Hurtt.

The day is co-sponsored by FOHH and the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA), and offered in conjunction with the Northern Virginia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects' **Architecture Month**. For more information, call 703.768.2525. ❖



FOHH and FOHMP Join to Protect Huntley's Cold War Historic Site

Huntley's proximity to the nation's capital has long given it a federal significance. More than once, the farmlands of Thomson Mason's "Huntley" and his brother Richard Mason's "Oakley" were impressed into the defense of Washington. During the Civil War, Union forces encamped at Huntley to keep Confederate forces at bay.

During the Cold War, the federal government stood up an **anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) battery** on former Mason lands now in Huntley Meadows Park (HMP). Remnants of the AAA site remain, but its existence is little known and even less appreciated. In an effort to change that, FOHH is working to enhance the site's preservation, interpretation, and visibility.

This past December, FOHH sponsored a **workshop-tour of the site** to develop better awareness and understanding of the site by HMP staff and the history community. At FOHH's invitation, **Gary Powers, Jr.** (son of the Cold War-era U2 pilot shot down by the Soviets) attended the event. Powers, now living in the Richmond area, has embraced his family's Cold War legacy and is an author, historian, and speaker of/on the Cold War (garypowers.com). He was able to offer insights into the site's Cold War context and take back his new-

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2025 Marks an Anniversary Year!

Wetlands Awareness Day at Huntley Meadows Park

Sunday, May 4, 12:00-3:00 p.m., rain or shine, free

This year marks the **200th anniversary of Historic Huntley**, the **50th anniversary of Huntley Meadows Park (HMP)**, and the **75th anniversary of the Fairfax County Park Authority!** An exhibit marking the anniversary of HMP, including references to Historic Huntley's history, is on display in the the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center at HMP **through the end of May**.

HMP will celebrate its anniversary at Wetlands Awareness Day. Discover the beauty and importance of wetlands by strolling the forested paths and immersive half-mile boardwalk trail. More information at 703.768.2525 and <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley-meadows/wetlands-awareness-day/050425> ❖

President's Column

by Todi Carnes

Marking the **200th anniversary of Huntley's circa 1825 construction**, one is moved to reflect on what it has been and might yet be. As to its Mason family origins, Huntley is largely a mystery—even as to its original appearance and purpose.

There are no known pre-Civil War photos, drawings, or even descriptions of the place. Its architect remains unidentified. It was modified substantially after passing out of the Mason family, and some educated guesswork has gone into restoring it to its Mason-era appearance. It has been variously referred to as a Mason family hunting lodge, farm house, and summer retreat.

Today it stands as a showcase of federal-period architecture and as a sentinel of time. When Huntley was built, the United States was less than 50 years old. Projecting its owner's sense of national pride, its fanlight was intended to portray a rising sun in tribute to the rising American republic. Perhaps for Huntley's enslaved population, the villa's fanlight might have symbolized

a wished-for setting sun—setting on governmental systems perpetuating the institution of slavery that had existed in America for some 200 years by the time of Huntley's construction.

Domestically, Huntley marked a time when the home refrigerator might be an ice house; the bathroom facilities were usually an out house; and the kitchen—at least for the “main house”—also was a separate building. Work was done not by machines, but by laborers, and often by enslaved Black people, many of whom were housed separately.

Two centuries later, as our nation prepares to observe its 250th anniversary, and as we commemorate Huntley's 200th anniversary, most of our domestic home activities are under one roof, thanks to modern technology. In a time when our population is more diverse in a multitude of ways, we would like to invite people to spend more time together as a community under Huntley's roof.

While we continue to research the original appearance of Huntley and its purpose(s), we seek to chart a course of increasing opportunities to use Huntley as a gathering place. We will work to

bring people to the site for reasons other than its architecture and history (which they can learn about once there). The important thing is to bring people together in person to feel the fanlight's sun at its zenith, warming hearts to connect when brought together under the same roof in shared experience. ❖

Cold War Historic Site

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found knowledge of Huntley's AAA site to the Cold War history community. Tour attendees included HMP staff, members of the boards of both FOHH and Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP), and a member of the Fairfax County History Commission.

The AAA site is in an area of HMP recently designated for forest restoration. The boards of both FOHH and FOHMP are concerned that work designed to generate new forest may endanger the remains of the AAA site. They have jointly requested that the FCPA select an alternate location for forest restoration, as other places within HMP need remedial attention. The AAA site requires preservation and interpretation to showcase Huntley's character as strategically important to and, in many ways, bound to the nation's capital. ❖



The Washington Defense Anti-Aircraft Artillery Gun Site “Hybla Valley W-51” was operational from 1951-1959. Photo from James N. Young, property of Huntley Meadows Park.

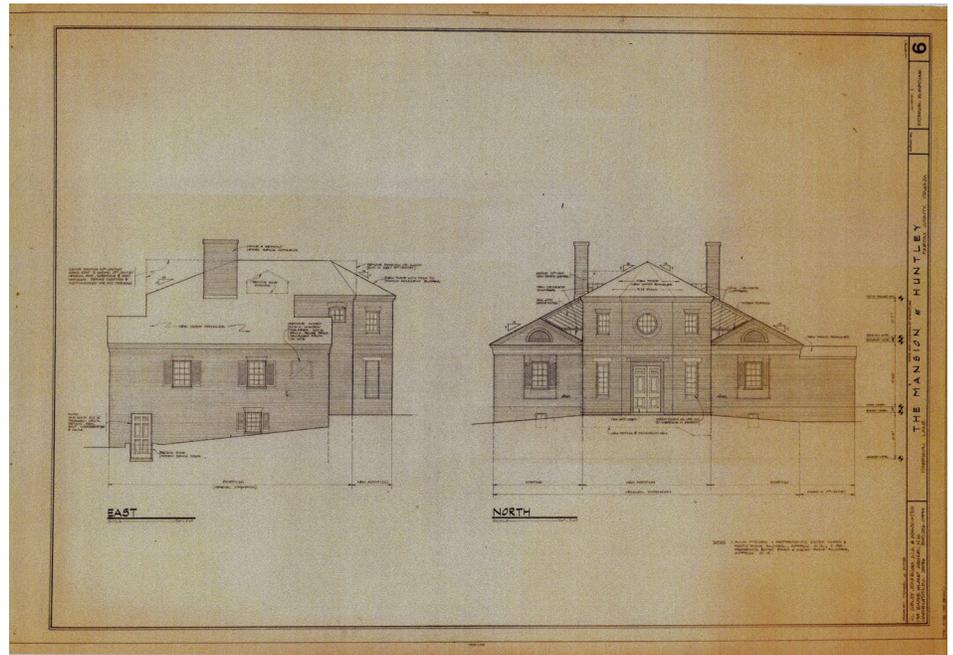
Imagining Huntley: J.L. Sibley Jennings, Jr.

Looking to Huntley's more recent history, the 1980's were a period of intense uncertainty. Huntley's historic architectural significance was acknowledged, but a buyer for it was hard to come by. As *The Washington Post* reported in 1984, the property had stood "vacant and vandalized for about 15 years . . . despite creation of a county historic district around it in 1976 and a listing on the National Register of Historic Places."* The *Post* concluded that this was about to change because a D.C. "restoration architect," J.L. Sibley Jennings, Jr., would be purchasing the property and transforming it into a home-based business.

According to the *Post*, the lower level of the villa would serve as Jennings' offices, while the upper levels would be his living quarters. Jennings planned to "house" employees in the tenant house and turn the ice house-root cellar complex into guest quarters. He generated more than 200 images relating to Huntley, showing its current state and how it might be transformed under his ownership.

Jennings, however, never purchased Huntley and none of his plans were realized. His association with Huntley faded with time. It was revived last year when FOHH Member Carolyn Gamble, preparing for architectural tours to be given at Huntley's Art & Architecture Day 2024, came across one of Jennings' visionary contemplations of Huntley.

A site plan showing the geometry of the buildings and landscape was found behind a filing cabinet at FCPA headquarters about 15 years before. No one knew its source. As Gamble prepared to make use of it last year, long-time FOHH Member Robbie McNeil wondered if it was by the architect who considered buying Huntley in the mid-1980's.

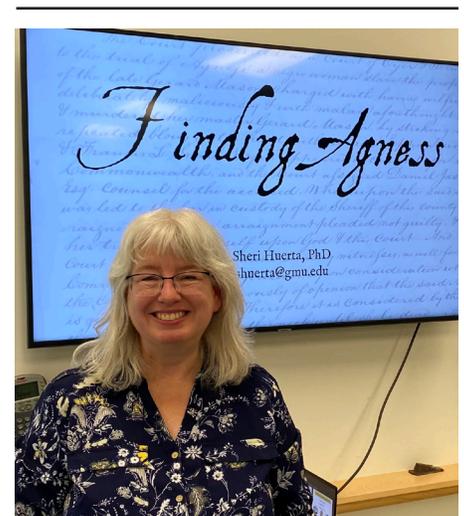


One of many of Jennings' Huntley images. J.L. Sibley Jennings, Jr., 1941-2016, "The Mansion at Huntley construction mylars, Harrison Road, Fairfax," 1985. Courtesy of the University of Georgia's Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library. https://dlg.usg.edu/record/guan_4125_r022#item.

Undertaking some documentary detective work, Gamble confirmed that it was.

Subsequent research located a collection of Jennings' papers, including his many drawings of Huntley, at the University of Georgia's Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library. FOHH paid to have the Huntley set of documents digitized and the library kindly granted FOHH's request to publicly post the scans online, making them available to all. You can now check out six folders of Jennings' papers at this link: https://dlg.usg.edu/collection/guan_4125

*"Huntley Manor To Be Restored by New Owner," by Paul Hodge, *The Washington Post* (September 26, 1984). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1984/09/27/huntley-manor-to-be-restored-by-new-owner/11091a05-7be7-4059-bb01-37fa0950aa25/>. ❖



Sheri Huerta Addresses FOHH at 2024 Annual Meeting

Dr. Sheri Huerta, adjunct professor at George Mason University, addressed the FOHH Annual Meeting in October 2024 at the John Marshall Library. Her fascinating talk, "Finding Agness," chronicled her efforts to unearth the life of Agness, an enslaved woman accused of killing Gerrard Mason, grandson of patriot George Mason, at Woodbridge Plantation in 1849. Dr. Huerta is writing a book on the subject, and FOHH hopes she will address us again when the book is completed. Photo by Carolyn Gamble.



Unwanted Artifacts at Huntley

A mattress, box spring, and bed frame were dumped on the fringes of Huntley alongside Harrison Lane in November 2024. A shopping cart also was left in the same general area this March 2025. Although FOHH strives to support preservation of cultural artifacts found at Huntley, these things are not among them! Many thanks to HMP staff members who promptly removed the items and saw to their proper disposition.



Upcoming FCPA Programs at Historic Huntley

For more information and to register, call 703.222.4664 or go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes, click on **Find a Program**, and search by **Historic Huntley**, **program name**, or **code**. Preregistration is required for many programs.

A tip for finding **ALL programs** at Historic Huntley. Enter the following: Search text: **hist**; Category of activity: **All Categories**; Place: **Historic Huntley**; Month: **All Months**; Day of the week: **7 Selected**; Age range: **All Ages**

- **Citizenship in the Community Merit Badge** (10-17 years) • March 31, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 pm, Code: FE0.6HVX
This program satisfies most of the requirements to earn the badge. Scouts must complete all pre-work before the start of class. Pre-work and program details available at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/scouts. Scouts unable to complete all requirements may receive partial credit from their merit badge counselor. \$48
- **Ice Cream at Historic Huntley** (2-Adult) • May 9, 12:00-1:30 p.m., Code: 633.9LSP; May 20, 12:00-1:30 p.m., 633.2DAD
Make and enjoy hand-cranked ice cream as Huntley's Harris family may have done. Discover how the histories of ice cream and Huntley follow a similar path from elite luxury to family fare. Ice well and Historic Huntley House tour included. \$10
- **Family Hilltop Outing for the 200th Anniversary** (5-Adult) • May 17, 4:30-5:30 pm, Code: 85W.TKEC
Join us for a family friendly tour of Historic Huntley high upon a hill in celebration of the 200th anniversary of the historic villa. Children must be accompanied by a registered adult. \$10
- **Citizenship in the Nation Merit Badge** (10-18 years) • May 26, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 pm, Code: 38A.7J8T
This program satisfies most of the requirements to earn the badge. Scouts must complete all pre-work before the start of class. Pre-work and program details available at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/scouts. Scouts unable to complete all requirements may receive partial credit from their merit badge counselor. \$48

Join Friends of Historic Huntley today!

Support Historic Huntley by joining this group of history- and historic preservation-minded people. Members receive the newsletter, an invitation to a members-only event, and a 10% discount on FOHH merchandise. FOHH is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Membership dues and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. With your volunteer efforts and financial support, we can make a difference!

Name _____ Tel _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Email _____

Huntley Headlines and event notifications are emailed to members.

Current and past issues of the newsletter and event information can be found at www.historichuntley.org.

- \$15 Individual \$20 Family \$10 Student/Senior
 \$150 Lifetime Membership Additional donation _____
 New Member **Renewing Member** **Total enclosed** _____

I'm interested in volunteering in the following area(s):

HH (work with staff at HMP): Docent Greeter Special Events

FOHH: Fundraising Program Planning Public Relations Research

Send completed form with check payable to *Friends of Historic Huntley* to:

FOHH, P.O. Box 7241, Alexandria, VA 22307-0241

Questions? info@HistoricHuntley.org

Huntley Headlines is produced by Friends of Historic Huntley, a local citizens group formed to preserve Historic Huntley and related cultural resources through advocacy and education.

Board of Directors: Todi Carnes, President • Robbie McNeil, Vice President • Carolyn Gamble, Secretary • Jere Gibber, Treasurer • Erica Hershler, Publicity • Charlotte Brown • Peter Christensen • Patty Young • Susan Escherich, Emeritus • Todi Carnes, HMHOA Representative

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Contact changes:

Please send your email or mailing address changes to info@HistoricHuntley.org or FOHH, P.O. Box 7241, Alexandria, VA 22307-0241.

Tour Historic Huntley: Saturdays, 10:30 a.m. and 12:00 p.m., April 12 through October 25

Discover a view for all time during a tour of Historic Huntley, with its vistas, voices, and stories, many reflecting the American quest for freedom. The tour includes the unfurnished late Federal-style circa 1825 villa, farm outbuildings, stories from the Huntley community, and an unparalleled view of Hybla Valley. A Fairfax County Park Authority site, the property is on the National Register of Historic Places, the Virginia Landmarks Register, and the Fairfax County Inventory of Historic Sites.

The villa is a short walk up a steep hill. An ADA compliant cart is available on request (please contact us in advance). The grounds are open from dawn to dusk from April through the end of October.

For tours, advanced registration is recommended. Purchase tickets at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/historic-huntley/hours-tour.

\$10, adults; \$8, seniors, youth, students; free for children up to 4. Check in at the lower house adjacent to the parking lot at 6918 Harrison Lane, Alexandria, VA 22306. For more information or to schedule a private tour by appointment, call 703.768.2525. ❖

Huntley-Related Web Sites

www.historichuntley.org

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/historic-huntley/

www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org

FRIENDS OF HISTORIC HUNTLEY

P.O. Box 7241
Alexandria, VA 22307-0241

www.historichuntley.org
info@historichuntley.org • 703.768.6987